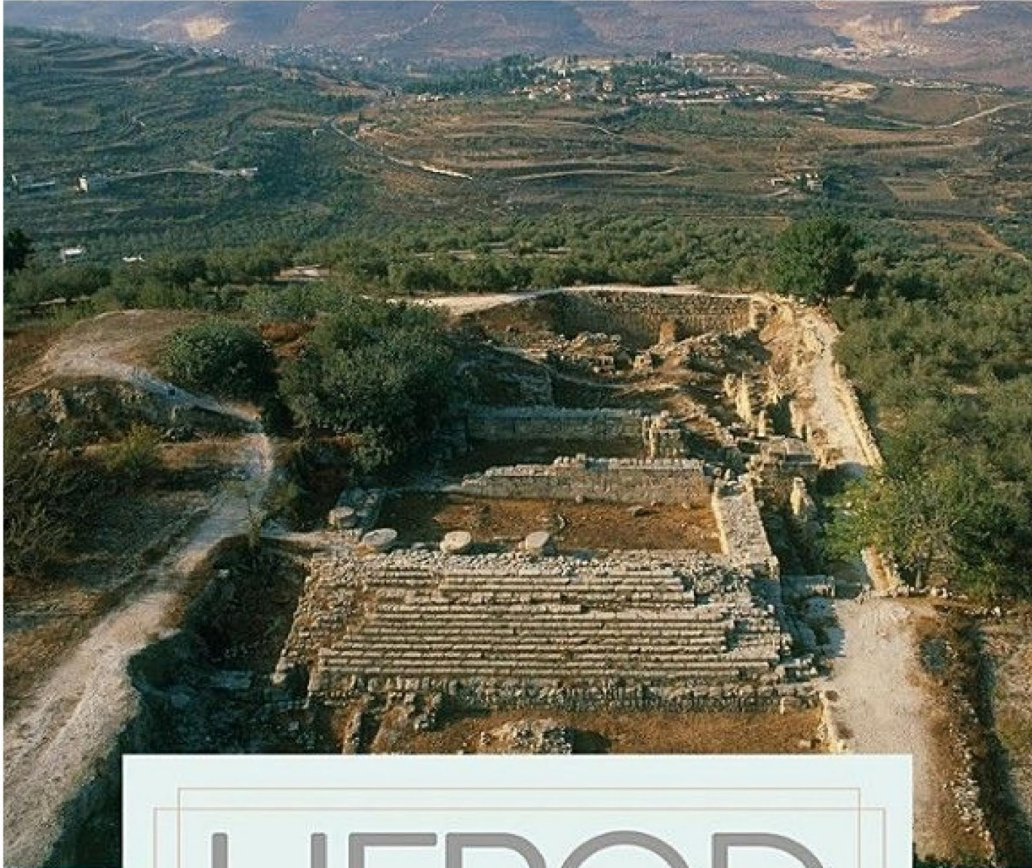




HEROD

King of the Jews and
Friend of the Romans

— ANCIENT BIOGRAPHIES —

Peter Richardson and
Amy Marie Fisher

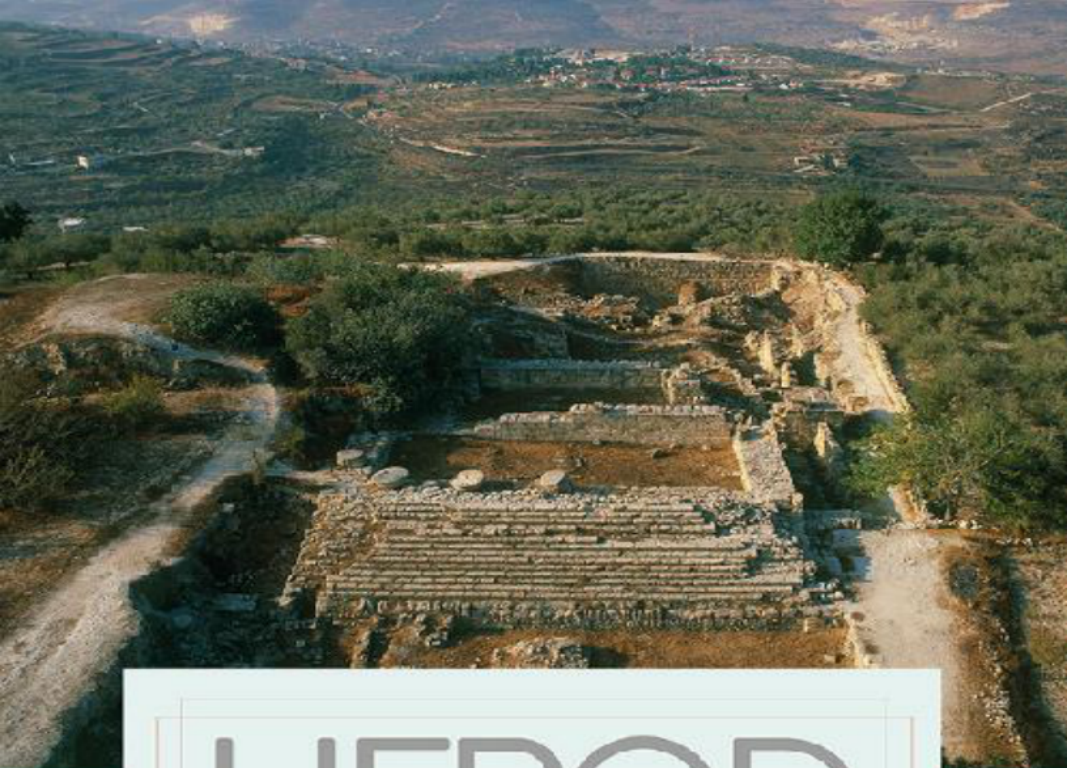
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King of the Jews and
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Herod

Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans examines the life, work, and influence of this controversial figure, who remains the most highly visible of the Roman client kings under Augustus. Herod's rule shaped the world in which Christianity arose and his influence can still be seen today. In this expanded second edition, additions to the original text include discussion of the archaeological evidence of Herod's activity, his building program, numismatic evidence, and consideration of the roles and activities of other client kings in relation to Herod. This volume includes new maps and numerous photographs, and these coupled with the new additions to the text make this a valuable tool for those interested in the wider Roman world of the late first century BCE at both under- and postgraduate levels. *Herod* remains the definitive study of the life and activities of the king known traditionally as Herod the Great.

Peter Richardson is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Religion at the University of Toronto, Canada.

Amy Marie Fisher works at the University of Alberta, Canada, where she is also an adjunct instructor in the study of religion.

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Herod

King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans

Second edition

Peter Richardson and
Amy Marie Fisher

Second edition published 2018
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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First edition published by The University of South Carolina Press 1996

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Richardson, Peter, 1935- author. | Fisher, Amy Marie, author.

Title: Herod: king of the Jews and friend of the Romans / Peter Richardson and Amy Marie Fisher.

Description: Second edition. | Abingdon, Oxon, New York, NY: Routledge, [2017] | Series: Routledge ancient biographies | Originally published: Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1996. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017001848 | ISBN 9781138803923 (hardback: alk. paper) | ISBN 9781315163352 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Herod I, King of Judea, 73 B.C.-4 B.C. | Jews—History—168 B.C.-135 A.D. | Jews—Kings and rulers—Biography.

Classification: LCC DS122.3.R53 2017 | DDC 933/.05092 [B] —dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017001848>

ISBN: 978-1-138-80392-3 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-16335-2 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon LT Std

by Swales & Willis Ltd, Exeter, Devon, UK

**To past and present colleagues
with gratitude and admiration**

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Preface and acknowledgments

We are grateful to Routledge for proposing a second revised edition of Herod's biography (published by the University of South Carolina Press in 1996, reprinted as a History Book Club edition, and reprinted in 1999 by Fortress Press and by T & T Clark). This present contribution to the Routledge series "Ancient Biographies" is longer and has more photos, permitting a wider range of evidence for analyzing Herod and his context. Herod would have been gratified to have his life included alongside other royals.

We have benefitted from published reviews of the first edition and also from reviewers enlisted by Routledge Press prior to this re-writing: Adam Kolman Marshak, Steve Mason, Byron McCane, Daniel R. Schwartz, and other unnamed reviewers. We have appreciated the collegiality of archaeological friends and mentors over many years: the late Ehud Netzer (Jerusalem), the late Douglas Edwards (Seattle Pacific College), Donald Ariel (Israel Antiquities Authority), Mordechai (Moti) Aviam (Kinneret College), Sandra Blakely (Emory University), Caitlin Clerkin (University of Michigan), Jennifer Gates-Foster (University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill), Jodi Magness (University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill), Michael Nelson (CUNY Queens), Douglas Oakman (Pacific Lutheran University), Andrew Overman (Macalester College), Jonathan Reed (University of LaVerne), and Daniel Schowalter (Carthage College), among others. Colleagues in religious studies and biblical studies have been generous in many ways: the late Sean Freyne (Dublin), the late Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (École Biblique et Archéologique de Jérusalem), the late Elaine Myers (London), the late Alan Segal (Barnard College/Columbia University), William Arnal (University of Regina), Brigidda Bell (University of Toronto), Willi Braun (University of Alberta), Laurence Broadhurst (University of Winnipeg), Michel Desjardins (University of Waterloo), Terence Donaldson (Wycliffe College, Toronto), Yaniv Feller (University of Toronto), Philip Harland (York University, Toronto), Jennifer Harris (University of

Toronto), Larry Hurtado (University of Edinburgh), William Klassen (University of Waterloo), John Kloppenborg (University of Toronto), Nathalie LaCoste (Memorial University), Russell Martin (Toronto), Halvor Moxnes (University of Oslo), Michele Murray (Bishops College, Québec), Judith Newman (Emmanuel College, Toronto), Calvin Roetzel (Macalester College and University of Minnesota), Sarah Rollens (Rhodes College), E. P. Sanders (Duke University), and Stephen G. Wilson (Carleton University), to name only a few.

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This new edition incorporates small changes in almost every line as well as larger changes. The many important studies published in the last two decades have meant numerous additions and alterations and new references. One major difference is the re-ordering of the chapters, so that Herod's story is told sequentially in Part I, with Part II dealing with Herod's context. The original introduction has been deleted and what was a conclusion is now an introduction. Some sections have been deleted, others totally or extensively rewritten, while a new final chapter considers Rome's view of Herod and his family at the same time as it considers early Christian developments. New sections include a history of scholarship on Herod; Josephus's works; the Herodian economy; Rome's *amici*; Herod's army and navy; and the chronology of Herod's wives. We have reconsidered and altered our chronological summary and rearranged the list of Herod's building projects.

We repeat what we said in the Preface of the first edition, that Herod was much like Henry VIII, Catherine the Great, and Peter the Great: talented, vigorous, lusty, skillful, charismatic, attractive, decisive, and influential. Like them, he was a disaster in his personal life; also like them, he changed his nation's history. Others were known as "the great"—for example, Alexander, Antiochus, Pompey, and Frederick—but it is rather ironic that Herod, popularly called Herod the Great to this day, was known neither in his lifetime nor soon afterword by this title, and we do not so name him; we generally use the simple form, Herod.

Authors need not like the subjects of their biographical studies, but it helps if there is something to admire. While Herod's personality was not attractive, both authors' admiration derived initially from the finesse and grandeur of his architecture. No one in Herod's period built so extensively with projects that shed such a bright light on that world; his importance for students of early Roman architecture is shown by the fact that whole monographs have been dedicated to his buildings. While

our fascination began with his structures, his significance goes much deeper: he negotiated his way through fast-paced changes as Rome was transformed from a republican to an imperial form of governance; he was a leading “client king” among a hatful of successful figures; he secured Judea’s independence for the following few generations; he and his successors marked a turning point in Mediterranean religious history.

A study of Herod can investigate his life with some hope of precision, though all such studies rest upon Flavius Josephus, who in the 70s to the 90s of the first century told a larger story of Judean history. Josephus in turn rested on the work of his own contemporary, Nicolas of Damascus’s *Universal History*, as well as on Herod’s own *Memoir*. Only fragments survive of the latter two. There is also extensive and still accumulating archaeological evidence, inscriptions and coins, and second- and third-hand appreciations. And there is a similar growth in evidence for contemporary figures with whom Herod may be compared.

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By comparison with Cicero, an older contemporary, we are mindful of what Mary Beard says, correctly: Cicero was “the one person whom it is possible to get to know better than anyone else in the whole of the ancient world” (Beard 2015, 26). She no doubt refers to understanding Cicero’s personality and motives—much better known than Herod’s—due to Cicero’s surviving letters and speeches, from which we can perceive Cicero’s highly exaggerated sense of his own importance. In Herod’s case, such evidence is missing. But what we miss by not having first-hand literary records, we make up from architectural remains and second-hand literary accounts.

Every study of Herod is a study in Josephus, and working with Josephus is not a simple matter, requiring comparison, analysis, and decision. Occasionally we have shown how we made choices, but since this is primarily a study of Herod, we have aimed to avoid Josephan issues becoming obtrusive. Instead we have included a brief account of recent scholarship on Josephus. We are deeply indebted to the ongoing work of the Brill Josephus project, master-minded by Steve Mason of Groningen University. The ongoing *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary* (see Mason’s introduction, in Feldman 2000) and its wide-ranging studies of aspects of Josephus’s work represent one of the most seminal advances in scholarship in the humanities in the recent past.

The first century BCE and first century CE constitute an enduringly fascinating period in human history: Rome gained its dominance in the

Mediterranean world; Judaism became a significant religious factor beyond the boundaries of Judea; the early Christian movement arose within that complex world; and Judaism and Rome clashed not once or twice but three times in little more than a half-century, with results that still resonate. The Herodian family bridges the three stories of Rome, Judea, and Christian origins, providing an entrée into the cultural, social, religious, political, and literary currents of the period.

As for Herod himself, he was not a “half-Jew,” as some have it, but a third-generation Jew attentive to his religion, though also a Roman citizen and a Hellenist. Above all, he was a realist who acknowledged Octavian’s new status and the cult of Roma and Augustus, while also giving attention to other cults, such as Pythian Apollo in Rhodes or Ba’al Shamim at Si’a. Herod was convinced about Judaism, but he was far from scrupulous. Augustus’s comment, “I would rather be Herod’s pig than his son,” implies that Herod abstained from eating pork, but was he scrupulous about it? Probably not. That remark also highlights Herod’s appalling treatment of some of his children, and his grotesque inability to deal with conflicts of his own household, a household rife with fear, mistrust, suspicion, jealousy, and resentment.

We are grateful to the following for permission to use previously published material:

p.xx

University of South Carolina Press, Columbia SC, to use the first edition as a basis for the second edition.

SAGE Publications to use and adapt the table by K. C. Hanson, *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, volume 19, pages 75–84, 142–51; and volume 20, pages 10–21 (Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey). Copyright © 1989, 1990.

Walter de Gruyter, for permission to quote from Aryeh Kasher and Eliezer Witztum, *King Herod: A persecuted persecutor—A case study in psychohistory and psychobiography* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), page xiv.

We are especially grateful to Jean-Philippe Fontanille, of Montréal, Canada, who has provided the images of coins, and to his co-author, Donald Ariel. When we realized that one image ([Figure 10.5](#)) was inadequate, Steven Kramer, the owner of a fine specimen of that coin, very kindly provided new photos, which we acknowledge gratefully.

Most of the photographs are by Peter Richardson, taken during a quarter-century of visiting the region, so some are a little out of date. Some of the most recent images were taken during a visit to the region (Israel, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Turkey) sponsored by National Geographic to film at a number of sites, and I gratefully acknowledge their generosity and interest.

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Louis H. Feldman. *Judean Antiquities 1–4 Translation and Commentary*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

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Alamy Stock Photos for supplying a digital aerial image of Hyrcania ([Figure 11.4](#)).

Jean-Philippe Fontanille for supplying, and permission to use, digital images of coins (Figures 10.1–4, 6), and for assisting in the description of those coins. And Steven Kramer for [Figure 10.5](#), supplied under severe time constraints.

Andreas J. M. Kropp, Assistant Professor, Nottingham University, for supplying, and permission to use, a digital image of his copyrighted drawing of a coin of Agrippa I ([Figure 13.1](#)).

[Livius.org](#) (and Jona Lendering) for supplying, and permission to use, a digital image (“Beirut, inscription of King Agrippa II”; EDCS 15300229) of the Queen Berenice and King Agrippa II inscription from Beirut ([Figure 10.7](#)).

Routledge Press for permission to use and amend maps of the Hasmonean Revolt, Hasmonean Rule, the Kingdom of Herod, Jerusalem buildings of Herod, and Tetrarchs after Herod (Maps 2.2, 2.3, 4.1, 9.1, and 13.1).

Amy Marie Fisher for a photograph ([Figure 9.8](#)) of the excavations at Omrit.

Peter Richardson for the remaining unattributed photographs.

Abbreviations

Ancient sources

11 QT	The Temple Scroll, Qumran Cave 11. Florentino García Martínez. <i>The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated. The Qumran Texts in English</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1996.
<i>Acts of Pilate</i>	F. C. Conybeare. <i>The Acts of Pilate</i> . Piscataway NJ: Gorgias, 2006 [1896].
Annius Florus	Lucius Annius Florus, <i>Epitome of Roman History</i> . Translated by E. S. Forster. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press (Loeb Classical Library 1984 [1929]).
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i> . Translated by H. St. J. Thackeray and Ralph Marcus. <i>Josephus</i> , volumes 4–9; Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1930 and following.
<i>Apion</i>	Josephus, <i>Against Apion</i> . Translated and edited by H. St. J. Thackeray. <i>Josephus</i> , volume 1. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1926.
<i>Appian</i>	Appian, <i>Civil Wars, Mithridatic War, Syrian Wars</i> ; Appian, <i>Roman History</i> . Translated and edited by Horace White; Loeb Classical

- b.* Library. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1912–13.
Babylonian Talmud. See I. Epstein, editor. *The Babylonian Talmud*. London: Soncino, 1935–52. Various tractates are cited: for example, *b. BB (Baba Bathra), Niddah, Qiddushin, Ta'anith, Yoma*.
- BMC* British Museum Catalogue.
BMC Gal W. W. Wroth. *British Museum Catalogue of the Greek coins of Galatia, Cappadocia, and Syria*. London: British Museum Department of Coins and Medals, 1899.
- BMC Pal* G. F. Hill. *British Museum Catalogue – Palestine (Galilee, Samaria and Judaea)*. London: British Museum, 1914.
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- CIAtt.* *Corpus Inscriptionum Atticarum*. Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1873.

Cicero <i>Atticus</i>	Cicero, <i>Letters to Atticus</i> . Translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978.
Cicero <i>Speeches</i>	Cicero, <i>Selected Political Speeches</i> . Translated by Michael Grant; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.
CIG	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> , volume 2.
CIJ	Jean-Baptiste Frey. <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum</i> . Revised, New York: Ktav. 1970 (reprint of 1936 and following).
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> . Berlin, 1862 and following.
CRAI	Comptes rendues de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres. 1857 and following.
Diodorus Siculus <i>Bibliotheca</i>	Diodorus Siculus, <i>The Library of History</i> . Translated by C. H. Oldfather et al., Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1935 and following.
Eusebius <i>Church History</i>	Andrew Louth, editor, and G. A. Williamson, translator. <i>The History of the Church: From Christ to Constantine, by Eusebius</i> . Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990.
FGrH	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Berlin 1923 and following. F. Jacoby. <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1954 [1876].
FHG	Nicolas of Damascus, <i>Fragmenta historicorum graecorum</i> , ed. C. Müller, T. Müller, et al. Paris: Didot, 1853–70.
Gemara, <i>Sukkah</i>	The Gemara (“study”) is a portion of the Talmud with analysis and commentary on the Mishnah. Gemara and Mishnah together comprise the Talmud. See various tractates, for example <i>Sukkah</i> .

Homer <i>Iliad</i>	E. V. Rieu. <i>Homer: The Iliad</i> . Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2014.
	p.xxv
Horace <i>Satires</i>	Niall Rudd. <i>Horace: Satires and Epistles; Persius: Satires</i> . Fourth edition. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2005.
IAA	Israel Antiquities Authority. For texts, see Hannah M. Cotton et al. <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae: Jerusalem, Part 1: 1–704</i> . Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010.
IGL see IGR	
IGR	R. Cagnat, editor. <i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes</i> . Rome: L'Erma 1964 [1911].
ILS	Hermann Dessau, editor. <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> 1892–1916; cited in Sherk 1984.
<i>Jerome Commentaria in Jeremiam</i>	Michael Graves, translator. <i>Commentary on Jeremiah by Jerome</i> . Ancient Christian Texts; Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, 2012.
<i>Jerome Commentaria in Zechariam</i>	Forthcoming, IVP Academic.
JRASS	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i> Supplement Series.
Justin, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>	Michael Slusser, editor. <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> . Translated by Thomas B. Falls; Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003.
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Livy	1926. Titus Livius, <i>History of Rome</i> . Volumes 1–13; Translated by B. O. Foster; Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1919 and following.
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Introduction

The following “achievements of King Herod” is wholly imaginary. We aim at an approximation of how Herod might have wished to be remembered publicly, so a feeling of exaggeration and self-congratulation should be expected, with no recognition that there could be a negative side to the evaluation. This fictional text mimics Augustus’s *Res gestae* (“things achieved”; Brunt & Monroe 1967), of which several copies were made for display, the fullest version being found in Ankara (Ancyra). It was likely written several years before his death.

“The achievements of King Herod”

A copy is here set out of the achievements of King Herod and of his expenditures in restoring Judean pride and self-confidence. The original is engraved on bronze tablets at Caesarea Maritima, with copies in Jerusalem, Sebaste, and Panias.

- 1 At the age of twenty-five years I was appointed governor of Galilee; I raised an army at my own expense to suppress brigandage in the region and put down Hezekiah, who was oppressing Galileans.
- 2 Three times I was appointed procurator [*epitropos*] of Syria, first by Sextus Caesar, then by Cassius Longinus, and finally by Caesar Augustus. I brought peace to southern Syria and assisted in its financial management.
- 3 I served Hyrcanus, the last of the Hasmonean kings, faithfully with forces I raised and paid for myself, and I fought vigorously against his brother Antigonus, who sought to usurp his throne. When Antigonus allied himself with Parthia, Rome’s enemy, I fought their forces, though my army was badly outnumbered. I also conducted

campaigns against the armies of Chalcis, Iturea, and Nabatea, inflicting severe defeats.

- 4 During Rome's civil wars I ensured Judea's security through well-chosen alliances. After Julius Caesar was assassinated and his murderers were brought to heaven's retribution, I was appointed tetrarch of Galilee and later king of Judea by the Senate in Rome.

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- 5 My troops and I supported Sextus Caesar at Apamea, Mark Antony at Samosata, and Caesar Augustus at Alexandria. My troops also accompanied Aelius Gallus in Rome's expedition against the Sabeans in Arabia Felix. I built and equipped Judea's first navy at my own expense, and with it I accompanied Marcus Agrippa on his campaign against Pontus in the Black Sea and at Sinope. I ensured peace in the East by keeping peace in Judea.
- 6 When I was appointed king, Judea was a small landlocked state. To the original territory of Judea, Galilee, and Perea, Augustus added Samaritis and Western Idumea. I successfully persuaded him to return territory unlawfully given Cleopatra. Augustus added to my kingdom the coastal cities of Gaza, Azotus, Joppa, Straton's Tower, and Anthedon, together with Gadara and Hippos. Later, I was granted rule over Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis to mark my pacification of those regions from brigands. Augustus added Hulitis and Panias, formerly parts of Iturea, to my territory, extending Judea to the size of the kingdom under the blessed Kings, David and Solomon.
- 7 I secured for Jews living abroad in the Diaspora freedom to worship the God of Israel, to live where they wished, to follow the dietary laws, to keep the Sabbath holy, to send the temple tax to Jerusalem, and to be free from service in Rome's army. Because of my friendships with Augustus and Marcus Agrippa, decrees were passed in numerous cities guaranteeing these rights and privileges. In gratitude, Rome's Jewish community named synagogues after the three of us.
- 8 With the agreement of the Lord's high priests and as a mark of my piety, I rebuilt at my own expense the temple in Jerusalem to the Lord of the Universe, blessed be he. I trained priests to do the work, gathered materials from the four corners of the world, and prepared stones and timbers ahead of time. Not a day of sacrifice

was left unmarked, nor did a day of rain slow the workers on the divine project.

- 9 I strengthened Judea's economy through friendly contacts with neighboring peoples; I also improved trade routes, enlarged harbors, constructed massive public works, increased the population, and planned new cities.
 - 10 When earthquakes, famines, or plagues shook the nation, I provided supplies of grain, tax relief, and support for the elderly and infirm.
 - 11 I increased exports such as dates, opobalsam, wine, olive oil, and asphalt; I encouraged industries such as pottery, glass, and perfume.
 - 12 In recognition of my assistance, Augustus granted me control over the copper mines in Cyprus and half the revenues from the mines, revenue that I used to support my people when they were in need.
 - 13 I improved social justice with new laws while encouraging observance of Torah. I suppressed dissension among the people and within my own family, and I put an end to brigands and revolutionaries who tyrannized the common people.
- p.3
- 14 I was on friendly terms with all true worshipers of the Lord, including Judeans in the Diaspora; I discouraged sectarianism and worshipped the God of Israel in his temple.
 - 15 I shared my rule with other worthy persons: with Hyrcanus; with my brothers Phasaël, Joseph, and Pheroras; with my brother-in-law Costobar; and with my sons. My sons were educated in Rome to equip them better to rule in Judea and my children were married to others of equal status.
 - 16 I rebuilt the walls and defensive towers of Jerusalem for the security of the people, I expanded the city with new streets and houses, and I enhanced the city with palaces and public buildings including a theater and an amphitheater, with shops and aqueducts and cisterns.
 - 17 Samaritis was reincorporated into Judea; I rebuilt the city of Samaria and renamed it Sebaste to mark my friendship with Caesar Augustus, providing it with walls, towers, stoas, temples,

aqueducts, a theater, and a stadium.

- 18 Likewise I constructed Caesarea Maritima, making its harbor Sebastos the largest harbor on the Inland Sea. Its walls, towers, stoas, aqueducts, religious buildings, palace, theater, and stadium were built using the latest technology in honor of my patron Augustus.
- 19 New cities were built on my instructions at Phaselis near Jericho, Antipatris, Agrippias, Pente Komai, Gaba, Bathyra, and Heshbon. I settled veterans on allotments of land that I paid for from my own resources.
- 20 In addition to the temple in Jerusalem I showed my piety in a memorial to the Patriarchs and Matriarchs in Hebron, another to Abraham at Mamre, one to King David in Jerusalem, and in tombs for my family and me in Jerusalem and Herodium. I built temples to Roma and Augustus in Caesarea, Sebaste, and Panias, as well as reconstructing a temple in Rhodes and completing a temple in Si'a.
- 21 I was made President of the Olympic Games for life to acknowledge my contributions, and I instituted new games in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Sebaste, where competitors honored me by their prowess. I built facilities for games and festivals for the people of Damascus, Ptolemais, Sidon, Berytus, Tripolis, and Delos. Inscriptions and monuments have been erected to honor my generosity in Athens, Chios, Kos, Samos, Pergamum, Phaselis, Cilicia, and Lycia.
- 22 I improved public facilities in Tyre, Byblos, Laodicea-on-sea, Balanea, Antioch, and Sparta. At Nicopolis, near where Caesar Augustus triumphed over Rome's enemies, I constructed many of the public buildings.
- 23 I secured the borders of Judea and built fortresses and walls where necessary.
- 24 In recognition of my role, I was appointed "protector" of Nabateans.
- 25 At my own expense I stimulated the economy, engaged in public works, provided tax and famine relief, and built religious and cultural buildings.

- 26 I brought pure spring water from great distances by aqueducts to Jerusalem, Caesarea, Phaselis, Jericho, Berytus, Laodicea, and in other locations too numerous to mention, all at my own expense.
- 27 The beneficent Caesar Augustus, long may he rule, and the late lamented Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa honored me with their friendship and trust. As “friend and ally” of Rome, I was as vigilant for her interests as for those of my own peoples, while I was sought out to give assistance to others in their dealings with Rome.
- 28 My family was rewarded with Roman citizenship, the responsibilities of which we have faithfully carried out for three generations and proudly pass on to future generations.
- 29 I am now in the seventieth year of my age and will soon be gathered to my fathers. My body is to be laid in my mausoleum at Herodium, my favorite retreat. May Judea long be blessed under the rule of my children and children’s children. Dated at Jericho in January, in the consulship of C. Calvisius Sabinus and L. Pasienus Rufus, year one of the 193rd Olympiad and year 37 of my reign.

A century of studies of Herod (from Otto to Vermes and Marshak)

The imaginary recounting of Herod’s *Res gestae* aims to replicate Augustus’s self-congratulatory mood in his account of his own achievements. It lacks allusions to events reflecting negatively on Herod because he would have omitted them, so its picture of Herod is at odds with scholarly views, even the most benign. The dominant modern portrait has been dark, gloomy, and foreboding: Christian perspectives have taken their cue from the brief account in Matthew 2:16–18, with Herod as the killer of innocent children in Bethlehem, while Jewish approaches see him as an oppressor of his people and the cruel usurper of the legitimate position of the Hasmonean rulers. Both Jewish and Christian views have been changing substantially in recent years.

The earliest biographical study of Herod seems to have been by Robert Millar (1652–1752), a Church of Scotland minister in Paisley (Millar 1782), interested in the history of Christianity’s spread and its missionary enterprise in his own day. Millar demonized Herod, and for the next hundred years or so this view dominated. More nuanced studies of Herod’s life began to appear with exploration of the Levant in the nineteenth century and increased attention to the history of Judaism,

including an increasingly contextual understanding of the Bible, better knowledge of the geography, languages, literature, and rhetoric of the ancient world.

p.5

Beginnings

Walter Otto

The classic study of Herod a century ago was a groundbreaking 1913 work by Walter Otto (1874–1958), initially a lengthy encyclopedia entry, which soon appeared separately as a monograph (Otto 1913). Otto’s decision to write about Herod was unexpected, since his primary interest as a classical philologist was in Greek myth and religion, especially the Olympian gods. He is particularly known for his study of the Dionysus myth and cult. Though his philological training was extremely strong, his background in areas related to the study of Herod was somewhat limited, and most of his ongoing interests were in fields related to Greek religion and culture, although later he was deeply involved in the Nietzsche corpus. He was by no means as well versed in the study of Judaism as he was in Greek (and Roman) literature; indeed, in some lists of his work his book on Herod is not even noted. When Abraham Schalit (see below) was writing his *magnum opus* on Herod later, he saw Otto’s study as a “counterweight” to some analyses of Herod (Kasher & Witztum 2007, xi); that is, a counterweight—built on impeccable philological and classical credentials—to offset the imbalance he found among Jewish authors. Otto’s *Herodes* continues to be influential.

Emil Schürer

A leading German scholar at the end of the nineteenth century (1844–1910), Schürer’s agenda was to illuminate the study of the New Testament from a study of Judaism. His thorough examination of little-understood corners sometimes resulted in glaringly disproportionate excursions; for example, he devotes substantial space to Herod’s seven-decade history, but he gives Quirinius’s momentary census almost two-thirds as much space as he gives Herod’s whole life. This classic work first appeared in 1886, preceding Otto’s study by a quarter-century; it is still available today in an updated version, and is still valuable (Schürer,

Vermes, Millar, & Black 1973–87). His views are signaled at the outset:

Herod, it seemed, was born to rule. Endowed with strength and stamina, he accustomed himself at an early age to hardships of all sorts. He was an excellent horseman and a good hunter He was trained in war from his youth. By the time he was twenty-five years old, he had already won a reputation by his campaign against the brigands in Galilee. And again in the last years of his life, as a man over sixty, he personally led a campaign against the Nabataeans. Success seldom eluded him when he himself directed a military enterprise. By nature he was wild, passionate, hard and unyielding. Finer feelings and tenderness were foreign in him. Whenever his own interests seemed to demand it, he wielded an iron hand, even at the cost of rivers of blood. If necessary he spared neither his nearest relations nor his passionately loved wife.

p.6

(Schürer 1973–87, 1.294–5)

Schürer's division of Herod's life into three periods has often been followed in subsequent studies: a first period down to 25 BCE of struggle against various opponents (Cleopatra, the Hasmoneans, the people, and the nobles); a middle period (25–13 BCE), when most of the major buildings were undertaken; and a closing period (13–4 BCE) marked by "domestic misery." Schürer thought Herod's Judaism was only superficial (1.311), paralleled by his determination to spread Gentile culture (1.312), so that the final period was a period of "semi-pagan rule" (1.325). Schürer's overall approach has had a very strong influence on all who are inclined to examine the early Christian documents from the perspective of Judaism. Like Otto, Schürer pays attention to Herod's building projects, many of which "were of great benefit" (1.315), although neither Otto's nor Schürer's studies were able to use detailed examination of individual building sites that has characterized the efforts of the last century.

Classic studies

The study of Herod was reshaped in the mid-twentieth century by scholars whose primary interests were the study of Greece and Rome and others whose focus was Jewish studies. For a period of time scholars of early Christianity neglected Herod; most were theologians focused on other issues of the day, such as Christology, for which Herod the Great was irrelevant. Much the most important monograph was by Abraham Schalit, a magisterial work that has not been superseded for depth and detail.

A. H. M. Jones

The work of A. H. M. Jones (1904–70) is rooted in a sophisticated and broad understanding of the eastern Roman provinces (Jones 1967 [1938]), but his study of Herod is popular and lacks references. Jones balances Herod’s personal faults and his “amiable qualities”: on the one side, ruthlessness and suspicion; on the other, family affection, including generosity to his brother, attachment to his trouble-making sister, and patience with his sons. Jones emphasizes the confidence Antony, Augustus, and Agrippa all placed in Herod, his financial and organizational abilities, and his energy (Jones 1967, 151–3). Coming from a specialist in the eastern Roman provinces (Jones 1937), Jones’ analysis of Herod’s context is important. He demonstrates that Herod was not under the authority of the procurator or legate of Syria, but was directly subordinate to the emperor (Jones 1967, 64; see also Carrier 2011), a question examined earlier by Otto. When Josephus says that Herod was made procurator of Syria, Jones thinks the phrase is inexact, that Herod was a kind of financial adviser to the procurator of Syria, indicating Augustus’s high opinion of Herod’s loyalty and of his financial capabilities. Jones’s discussion of Herod’s finances and benefactions (1967, 86–110; see [Chapter 10](#)) is instructive. He believes that Herod’s taxation policy was not crippling, but rather that his policies allowed Judea to increase in prosperity. Some taxes were aimed particularly at the upper classes, as Herod apparently felt some concern for his poorer subjects. Another aspect of his increased revenues was the development through irrigation of areas such as the lower Jordan valley, which increased the taxable value of the kingdom, as his construction of Caesarea also did. Herod had other sources of income, Jones says, some of which were based on his business ability, his inheritance, income from the Cyprus copper mines, and his loans, for example to Nabatea.

p.7

Stewart Perowne

Educated at Cambridge and Harvard universities in classics and in archaeology, Perowne (1901–89) went to Palestine in 1927 during the British Mandate (1920–48), where he learned Arabic. After several Foreign Service postings—and a failed marriage to Freya Stark—he returned to what had recently become the state of Israel. During this period he wrote *Herod* (Perowne 1956), along with other books on Roman history. He views Herod as the “least Judaic and most Hellenic” of Antipater’s five children (1956, 23), emphasizing influences on Herod:

his time as a child with the Nabateans (1956, 35), where he was exposed to a wide variety of cultures; his friendship with Mark Antony as a youth (1956, 39); his training by his father Antipater (1956, 45). Nevertheless, says Perowne, there was “a strange and frightening mixture” in Herod, “a psychological tangle which became more involved as he grew older” (1956, 46). Herod balanced the interests of “the two Jewries,” “the predominantly agricultural community of Palestine, and the widespread complex Dispersion” (1956, 102). As a result, “he promoted secular westernization” at the same time as he was zealous “for enhancing the prestige of Judaism” (1956, 105). “His policy was clear and simple: . . . to suppress nationalism, . . . to promote the honour and welfare of Judaism, both in Palestine and in the Dispersion, and to foster westernization” (1956, 108). Perowne concludes that Herod was an ardent Jew, though he failed to win the support of most of his subjects; he was “ignorant because he was insensitive,” not realizing the spiritual force of Judaism and its spiritual destiny, its messianic expectations (1956, 179–80). Herod, in Perowne’s view, was fixated too much on the affairs of this world rather than messianism. Though Perowne presents a reasonably balanced account of Herod, his glasses are colored by late-1940s expectations for the new state of Israel.

p.8

Samuel Sandmel

Shortly after Samuel Sandmel’s (1911–79) book on Herod appeared (Sandmel 1967), Abraham Schalit observed that in general Jewish scholars’ thinking was distorted by national and religious sentiment. Sandmel falls under this observation. Sandmel believed Herod’s education—an important issue for him—was deficient: Herod spoke Aramaic and he knew Greek, but did he know Hebrew, “a tremendously more significant question” (1967, 59)? Could he read the Pentateuch? Did he observe the sacred calendar? Was his Judaism merely environmental? Did he understand what separated Pharisees from Sadducees? Was he a Jew by conviction? Did he face sneers about his father’s Idumean ancestry and his mother’s Nabatean ancestry? Sandmel stresses that Herod’s father, Antipater, “was a Jew, and he needed to be regarded as a Jew, and accepted fully as a Jew” (1967, 73); but perhaps his Jewish patriotism was simply a need for acceptance. Herod, by contrast,

erected a wall ... between himself and the inner life of the Judaism of the time. ... Herod was reconciled to an external practice of Judaism, but never with mind or

heart or soul. Rather, Herod was a harried, suspicious man, constantly in fear of assassination, and constantly confined within the limited authority which the Romans extended to their “client kings.”

(1967, 117)

Sandmel sees a contrast between Antipater, who ceaselessly wanted to be accepted as a Jew, and Herod, who took his Judaism for granted; Herod was a Roman who wanted to show his Roman *bona fides* (1967, 171–2). The contrast between father and son is forced.

As he tells Herod’s story, Sandmel makes passing comments indicative of a harsher judgment than in his more nuanced assessments: he refers to Herod’s “police state” (1967, 192); he argues that Herod’s support of Ionian Jews was not “true generosity” but merely “a sense of some responsibility” (1967, 195); Herod “became uncontrolled in his anger and unrestrained in his harshness” (1967, 254); and Sandmel likens Herod to Napoleon and Mussolini. He says, “in place of eulogy” (1967, 259), that Herod was hated and he was cruel, but he was also much maligned (1967, 261).

Abraham Schalit

Schalit’s massive study of Herod (Schalit 1969) may never be replaced for its thoroughness and fairness (Schwartz 1987, 1995). Schalit (1898–1979) moved to Palestine in 1929, a few years after completing his doctoral dissertation on Josephus in Vienna in 1925. He criticizes the way Jewish scholars had dealt with Herod in the following concluding statement (Kasher & Witztum 2008, xiv):¹

p.9

[Herod] wished to spearhead a new order in Jewish life amid the setting of the new redemption represented by the Roman kingdom and Augustus “the redeemer.” ... All of this was intended to open for the Jewish people a portal to the non-Jewish *oikumené*, and to dominate the Jewish sphere, which was hermetically sealed from the non-Jewish world on the domestic front. Although the Hasmonaeans from Judah Aristobulus I onward had already introduced certain Hellenist innovations into the external life of their state, the actual, earnest effort in this regard was made by Herod. This attempt found its clearest and most intense expression in the Roman interpretation given by Herod to the Jewish messianic idea. Had he succeeded, Herod would have snatched from the Jewish people the unique hallmark of its spiritual character which had left its imprint during the Second Temple period, turning it into one of the multitude of nations of the “redeeming” Hellenist-Roman *oikumené*. ... [But] between the faith of the Jewish people and Herod’s “messianic”-Roman ideal yawned a gaping chasm that could not be bridged ... Herod remained

in eternal disgrace in the nation's memory, not only on the basis of the above but also for a different reason involving his tormented, warring psyche. ... The people saw Herod, destroyer of the Hasmonaean dynasty and some of the most treasured of its supporters, and the murderer of those closest to himself such as Mariamme and her sons, and recalled the many killings carried out by the king without benefit of justice. As a result, judgment was passed on him for all time. The people banished him from the national collective without adequately exploring the depths of the king's sickly spirit. Herod is engraved in the memory of the people as a bloodthirsty tyrant, and did not merit a favorable reputation despite the kindness he performed for the people and the land.

For the man truly did great things for the Jewish people. There is no question that if the people and the king had had the good fortune to comprehend each other's spirit, Herod's kingdom would have been highly revered in the people's memory, like that of David, for Herod's accomplishments in the political realm were no less than those of David and were perhaps even more worthy in their time as a result of the tribulations of Herod's time that stood in the king's way. Herod's political achievements, whose benefits are unquestioned, as well as the curse saddling the man and his ways in the nation's memory, are part and parcel of the same tragic fate that befell the man in his life and in his death. One can understand the feelings of his contemporaries, who were filled with horror and disgust at the sight of the king's actions in his dealings both public and private. But we who stand and observe the ways of the man and the king from a distance of two thousand years, for whom it is easy to discern the boundaries of light and shadow in a person's life, are obliged to weigh the virtues and the flaws against one another on the scales of justice, after removing from the equation all those matters that were a product of the times. We have no choice but to grudgingly admit that a kernel of great beneficence lay within Herod's Roman policy; had the people's leaders known how to use it for the good of the nation, they might have succeeded in sparing it from the terrible calamity that assailed it during the last seventy years of the Second Temple period ... Herod's successors were spineless, and the Pharisee leaders of the nation were too sequestered in their own world to be able to turn their thoughts to all the good and the beneficial concealed within the legacy of the great king. They deliberately caused his memory to be obliterated from the hearts of the nation, leaving him with the worst of both worlds: the good that he did was forgotten, and the abominations were preserved in memory for generations, until only the name "Herod the wicked" and the "Idumaeen servant" remained. But today's historian must call him by the name that befits him: Herod king of Israel.

p.10

Michael Grant

Like Jones, Grant (1914–2004) was a classical historian with broad interests in numismatics, ancient biography, history of the first century BCE and first century CE, and early Christianity. His study (Grant 1971) is not, however, altogether sure-footed on matters dealing with Jewish history and custom (for example, he overlooks the fact that kingship and high priesthood were not traditionally linked). He views Herod as an outsider to Judaism, ignoring the conversion of Herod's grandfather to

Judaism many years earlier (1971, 60), though he does emphasize that Herod allowed such persons as Hillel and Shammai to pursue “their creative tasks unimpeded by the king” (1971, 65). Most of Part II is devoted to Herod’s buildings.

Two chapters should be underscored. “How Herod paid for it all” (1971, 165–74) is a significant examination, though now superseded, of the ways Herod deliberately set out to improve the prosperity of Judea, especially through the construction of Caesarea Maritima on the site of Straton’s Tower (1971, 167). “Caesarea brought in trade and money,” but its construction absorbed enormous amounts, which Herod provided by levying a poll-tax, a land tax, customs duties, a tax on house property, perhaps a sales tax, and a stamp duty. To this Herod added income from his own estates in Idumea, Nabatea, and elsewhere. He raised money by making substantial loans to Arabs, charging elevated interest rates, and developing business contracts elsewhere in the Levant, including a deal with Augustus to receive half the revenue of the Cyprus copper mines. As Grant points out, “the massive scale of these operations is only feebly mirrored in Herod’s coinage, which has a rather shabby appearance” (1971, 174; [Chapter 10](#)). His assessment of “Marcus Agrippa and the Jews outside Judaea,” dealing with Herod’s excursion to the Black Sea and Asia Minor, rightly stresses its importance for Herod’s relations with Diaspora Jews (1971, 175–82). He concludes,

p.11

What Herod had brought his kingdom was peace ... a peace free from the incursion of Roman officials. Herod was justly able to claim that throughout the long duration of his rule he had never been asked by Augustus to admit Roman ex-soldier settlers, and he had kept the Roman administrators and tax-gatherers out.

(1971, 250)

Grant summarizes Herod succinctly:

Jew by religion, Idumaeon and Arab by race, Greek by cultural sympathy, Roman by political allegiance, these different instincts and inclinations mingled uncomfortably in Herod’s mind and heart ... he possessed the absolute conviction that the only way his country could survive was by aligning itself ... with the wider world outside.

(1971, 231)

Herod’s policy, he says, was pro-Roman, believing complete independence for Judea was impossible; Herod was convinced Judea’s prosperity depended on cooperating with Rome, so “It is incorrect to see

Herod as a quisling collaborating with the national enemy when he should have been fighting against them” (1971, 225).

The last two decades

Aryeh Kasher

It was inevitable someone would apply insights from psychiatry to analyze Herod, as Aryeh Kasher (1935–2011) and his collaborator Eliezer Witztum do (Kasher & Witztum 2007). They hypothesize that Herod suffered “from significant mental disorders . . . Paranoid Personality Disorder”; he deteriorated into a delusional disorder that episodically became psychotic, with a “loss of judgment, insight, and the ability to comprehend reality,” and these conditions were exacerbated by depressive states (2007, xv, 15–17). They liken Herod to Hitler and Saddam Hussein.

Their portrait follows a chronological scheme. Herod’s “Idumaeo-Arabic roots . . . were apparently the cause of feelings of profound inferiority . . . from early childhood to the end of his life” (Kasher & Witztum 2007, 19). “It is reasonable to assume that during his adolescence, repressed and internalized feelings of hostility might have surfaced in Herod’s psyche” (2007, 29). His betrothal to Mariamme

p.12

[o]stensibly ... seemed to assuage Herod’s anger over John Hyrcanus II’s part in having him brought to trial before the Sanhedrin in 46 BCE, but with the true deviousness and guile of an individual suffering from Paranoid Personality Disorder, he only momentarily suppressed his great hostility to Hyrcanus. An individual with a personality structure of this type is incapable of forgiving or forgetting.

(2007, 53)

In dealing with Herod’s elevation to the kingship, the authors emphasize Rome’s rejection of the Hasmoneans, though they underestimate positive assessments of Herod, by Mark Antony and Octavian and others throughout his life. Positive contemporary Roman evaluations over four decades contrast with Kasher’s and Witztum’s psychological analysis of Herod (2007, 65–72).

The authors’ use of Josephus and his sources is ambivalent. They are well aware of Josephus’s varied uses of his sources, but they rarely say

how Josephus's view of Herod, Josephus's sources' view of Herod, and their own portrait of Herod correspond. They often take Whiston's translation of Josephus's text as an accurate indication of Herod's paranoia. For example, they take Aristobulus's performance of his duties (at *Ant.* 15.51–3) prior to his murder as an allusion to Herod's inferiority complex, jealousy, and feelings of inadequacy (2007, 110–13).

A mini-summary gives some of the essential points:

We believe that as a result of his Paranoid Personality Disorder, by 40 BCE (i.e., at the age of 32) Herod had already lost control over his paranoid urges and was being driven by them. Later in life, he experienced similar episodes, the most serious of which involved the execution of his wife Mariamme (29 BCE). During the period under discussion (that is, thirty years after the first episode) his condition began to deteriorate extremely rapidly into a full-blown episode of delusional disorder, persecutory type, leading to the execution of his Hasmonean sons.

(Kasher & Witztum 2007, 314)

An afterword provides their summary of Herod's personality disorders: (1) a "Hasmonean complex" that overshadowed everything else; (2) a trampling of the "ancestral laws"; (3) an "idealizing of Hellenist-Roman culture"; (4) establishing Hellenist cities within the kingdom; (5) hostility toward his Jewish subjects and friendliness toward their Samaritan rivals; (6) adoption of Hellenist methods of governance; (7) troubles over his non-Jewish origins; (8) a strong pro-Roman orientation; (9) Paranoid Personality Disorder; (10) pretensions of grandeur; (11) reducing the status of the high priesthood; (12) the rise of the Boethusians; (13) "Herod the Great." Their final sentences (2007, 434) contrast Josephus's account of Hasmoneans' regret over their actions with Herod's lack of remorse. "No wonder then that he remains notorious in Jewish tradition (both religious and national) as a brutal ruler and symbol of the 'kingdom of evil.'"

p.13

Nikos Kokkinos

A prosopography of the Herodian family has been needed for some time. It is amply supplied in [part 2](#), preceded by an examination of Idumea in [part 1](#) (Kokkinos 1998/2010). Kokkinos makes the case that the family's origins were in western Idumea, and that Antipas, grandfather of Herod, was a Hellenized Idumean named *stratēgos* by Alexander Janneus, whose son Antipater succeeded him (1998, 94–7).

He stresses the family's connections with Ascalon, where there was a temple to Apollo, who was relevant later in Herod's activity. Apollo was identified with the Idumean god Qos, of whom Kokkinos finds reminiscences in the imagery on Herod's coins (1998, 121–2, 128–39; see [Chapter 10](#)). Kokkinos proposes a history of family connections with Ascalon coinage, some of which he thinks—unpersuasively—may portray Herod.

The remainder of the book deals with members of the family, grouped by their natural connections. The sleuthing is helpful, though sometimes pressed further than evidence permits. One may benefit from the analysis even if one dissents from Kokkinos's tendency to see a negative Hellenism under every stone or coin. He concludes that “there is no appropriate example of any Jewish family—that is to say biologically and religio-culturally Jewish—living in Judaea before the Herods, showing a degree of Hellenization a quarter as high” (1998, 345–6).

Norman Gelb

A popular “revisionist history,” Gelb's (b. 1929) account of Herod brings the approach of a radio, TV, and newspaper correspondent, who seems interested in almost everything; his previous books have mainly focused on the Second World War. He juxtaposes Herod's achievements against his shortcomings and failings (Gelb 2013).

Geza Vermes

A towering Israeli scholar whose career focused on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Vermes (1924–2013) has written the most irenic of the recent short studies of Herod (Vermes 2014). Vermes is convinced that both Christian and Rabbinic traditions

faced us with a caricature of the true Herod. Herod was not an enemy of the Jews, nor was he guilty of the massacre of the babes in Bethlehem, as the evangelist Matthew would like his readers to believe. He was heroic and horrible. A genius in politics as well as a giant in architecture and planning, he was at the same time shamefully vindictive towards those he considered potential rivals or opponents, including the close members of his family.

(Vermes 2014, xi)

Only half the short book deals directly with Herod, but those pages

offer a more judicious appraisal than some much longer studies. Herod's positive qualities were his loyalty (to Hyrcanus, to Mark Antony, to Octavian) and the fact that he left Judea richer, more civilized, and more beautiful. Vermes lets Josephus summarize Herod's negative qualities (2014, 101–2): “His lavish expenditures . . . made him a source of misery to the people from whom he took the money” (*Ant.* 16.154–5). And he was basically insecure: “He expected to receive the same deference himself as he showed his superiors. . . . The Jewish people, however, . . . incurred his displeasure, finding it impossible to flatter the king's ambition with statues, temples and marks of honour” (*Ant.* 16.156–8). Vermes argues,

a good historian should not allow Herod's generally known weaknesses to obscure his greatness, nor the negative aspects of his complex personality to obfuscate his brilliant and, yes, I will dare say it, his kindness and generosity towards his subjects, Jewish and non-Jewish, in their hours of need.

(2014, xi)

Like Josephus, he sees Herod as a kind of third man after Augustus and Marcus Agrippa.

Adam Kolman Marshak

In this extensively revised dissertation, set within the framework of an interest in Roman client kingship, Marshak (b. 1979) is concerned primarily with the question of how Herod presents himself, covering most of the relevant facets of Herod's career that one might find in a more traditional biographical study (Marshak 2015). Marshak avoids easy generalizations about Herod's character, rejecting the notion that oppression and repression were the basis of Herod's success. He posits, as his conclusion, that “the *power of image*, and one's *political self-presentation*, more than physical force and violence, determines a king's fate,” taking his cue on the “power of images” from Zanker (Zanker 1988). Marshak urges seeing Herod as a “quasi-Hasmonean,” in the sense that his legitimacy in the eyes of Judeans was linked to the Hasmonean family, as shown in architecture and coinage as well as dynastic maneuvering (2015, 110). Herod was an effective Hellenistic king within the Roman world (2015, Chapter 9), a particularly significant client king who sought to develop a program of Romanization (2015, Chapter 8), and an effective king both to Judeans and the Diaspora (2015, Chapter 10). He breaks new ground in differentiating Herod's ways of presenting himself to different audiences, and he continues a movement away from simplistic assessments of Herod—good king, evil king—while emphasizing the complexity posed

Conclusion

Examination of Herod's life and career has undergone continuous development, moving back and forth as cultural influences, backgrounds, and inclinations prompted. The last century has seen dramatically different studies; contrast, for example, the studies emerging at about the same time by Schalit, a Jew taking up a new life in the new state of Israel, Perowne, an Anglican classicist working in a Palestinian context, and Jones, a classicist with a special interest in the eastern Roman provinces. We observe four important trends over the last few decades.

First, assessments of Herod's life and work tend to be less blatantly negative. Some are avowedly "revisionist" analyses, reacting to overly partisan Jewish and Christian scholarship; still, some Christian scholars continue to see Herod as a convenient whipping boy beside whom they can contrast Jesus or Paul, while some Jewish scholars continue to denigrate Herod as a usurper who was insufficiently opposed to Rome. The trend is toward better balance.

Second, much constructive work on Herod in recent years has concentrated on particular aspects of his life and rule: the chronology of his reign (Mahieu 2012), his army (Shatzman 1991), his coinage (Ariel & Fontanille 2012), the economy of his kingdom (Udoh 2006), his royal court (Rocca 2008), and his architecture (Netzer 2008), for example. We will refer to these and others in their appropriate places.

A crucial change, in the third place, is an explosion of interest in the archaeology of Herodian sites. No one who has seen even a few of the remains of his works can fail to be impressed by the mind that lurks behind these structures. Some features extend to unexpected insights into Herod's biography: to take one example that will pop up subsequently, it seems clear from his buildings that Herod's commitment to Judaism was deeper than many previously thought, as shown by the prevalence of ritual bathing pools in his palaces. There are still, of course, substantial differences of opinion about the source of Herod's ideas among those who have examined them closely, so there is not yet a full consensus on how to integrate the investigation of his buildings with an examination of his life and character; that the material remains need to be carefully considered, however, is not doubted.

Fourth, recent examinations of Herod have benefitted from the sophisticated examination of Josephus's works, led by the vibrant recent scholarship represented in the large-scale new edition of his work (the "Brill edition"), a detailed commentary based on the Greek text (Mason 2005 and following). The most lasting contribution may be the commentary, but the plethora of full-length studies associated with the commentary series has added an unexpected richness to our appreciation of Josephus's works.

The last few decades of attention to a wide range of evidence is reshaping the prevailing view of Herod. A more nuanced interpretation of the primary literary sources has merged with an appreciation of the significance of non-literary materials. This picture has been well summarized by Marshak: the Herod of history, "far from being the culmination of all that is evil, was an astute and adept political player who skillfully manipulated the system to enhance his own position and power" (Marshak 2015, xxii). His success is shown by his long, relatively peaceful and stable reign, and his ability to pass on his realm to his heirs (Marshak 2015, xxvii).

p.16

This second edition of *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, two decades after the first edition, aims to contribute to the ongoing process of understanding the shape and significance of one of the most influential and longest-serving kings of Judea, a king who navigated the perils and opportunities of kingship under Rome's aegis. While we have consulted the scholarship of the last two decades, and have drawn extensively from recent analyses, in general the conclusions here are consistent with those of the first edition.

Josephus's accounts of Herod's life

Renaissance scholarship increasingly directed attention to the antiquities and literature of the Bible and the classics (Richardson 2006, 108–19), with a new emphasis on Josephus's importance. An edition of Josephus by William Whiston (1667–1752) was immensely popular. First published in 1737, it was often found beside the Bible and John Milton in eighteenth and nineteenth-century homes, as part of an educated public's essential reading. His translation made Herod's story available in readable form, effectively replacing dramatic versions of the story, which stage productions had presented in an exaggerated and demonizing fashion during the medieval and Tudor periods. The earlier

plays had concentrated on the most dramatically effective aspects of the material, the snippets that could be communicated in a brief, visually powerful display such as play 19, “The Massacre of the Innocents,” in the fifteenth-century York Corpus Christi Plays. Publication of Josephus’s works changed the picture entirely and eventually encouraged a more critical understanding of history to emerge.

Interest in Josephus and his writings expanded broadly a generation ago through a profusion of tools, resources, handbooks, studies, and varied approaches. The accounts of Herod in Josephus have attracted special attention because they provide useful ways to examine the intriguing differences between *Antiquities* (hereafter *Ant.*) 14.136–17.200 and *Jewish War* (hereafter *War*) 1.201–673 (Landau 2006).

Sources

In the early part of the twentieth century scholarly questions focused on Josephus’s use of sources (Shutt 1981; Thackeray 1929; Laqueur 1920). This appeared a fruitful line of enquiry because Josephus mentioned a number of his sources: scripture, Herodotus, Menander, Nicolas of Damascus’s *Universal History*, Herod’s *Memoirs*, Strabo’s *Geographica*, Roman Imperial *Commentaries*, *Tyrian Archives*, Roman provincial decrees, and more. With attention fixed on the sources he used in each of his works, scholars sought explanations for the differences between the works or the various parts of each (Richardson 2004, Chapter 15). The effort more or less fizzled out, as scholars appreciated that Josephus is much more than a skilled editor of multiple sources; in any case, identification of sources is rather speculative. The fact is that despite a concerted effort and better critical tools for making such judgments, scholars are not much farther ahead in discriminating Josephus’s sources, beyond those explicitly mentioned at specific places. This need not stymie restrained speculation about Josephus’s reliance on sources, but most students of Josephus are now more cautious in their claims about the origins of his work than was once the case.

Not exactly a source question but often discussed at the same time is Josephus’s use of assistants, a question based on an observation Josephus makes at least once (*Apion* 1.50), which was then turned into a theory about the differences among the sections of his work (e.g., Thackeray 1929, 100–24). Early skepticism about this approach has accumulated and become so consistent that it has been laid aside (Rajak

2002, 233–6). Josephus is a complex author who, in his various works or in parts of them, was capable of varying his style and approach.

Historiography

[Josephus's] evident historiographical verve and awareness indicated that his own paraphrase of the history of Herod required a lot of editing, adapting and rephrasing of structure, themes and words. The Herod narratives in both the BJ [*War*] and the AJ [*Ant.*] have a distinctive Josephan signature and fit in context, themes and language to the surrounding narrative and indeed to the works as a whole.

(Landau 2005, 29; see also Sterling 1992; Mader 2000; Friis 2015)

Two essential points dovetail nicely: Josephus shaped both treatments so that each is distinctive; and each of his accounts of Herod fits the surrounding narrative in that larger work (Landau 2005). Further, Feldman points out that the historiography underlying the two main works differs, with *Antiquities*' rhetorical approach being nearly the norm when Josephus wrote as contrasted with a critical historiography in *War* (Feldman 1998, 9). On the question of audience, it is commonly supposed *War* was written primarily for Jews in Babylon (for whom an Aramaic original was appropriate), while *Antiquities* was written with a primarily non-Jewish audience in mind in Rome, or more widely in Italy or in the Diaspora (for whom Greek was appropriate). This has been reconsidered, and in the case of *War* Steve Mason argues vigorously that in its present form *War* was set in Flavian Rome (Mason 2005, 71–100; cf. Cohen 1979).

p.18

Narrative

While Josephus narrates the Herod sections of his work in a roughly chronological manner, the pieces' overall shapes are not driven solely by an historical interest in chronicling the events of King Herod's life. Rather, Josephus uses this smaller narrative as a piece within the larger narrative of each work. For much of modern scholarship, however, the working assumption has been that Josephus's sources directly shaped his narrative (Mason 2016, 24). According to this logic, the reason Josephus includes a section on Herod is that he had Nicolas of Damascus's biography of Herod, and so spent a good deal of time on that period, glossing over later periods for which he was lacking a good written source. Interest in King Herod—or a perceived connection between King Herod and the later misfortunes of the Judeans—had nothing to do with

his decision. Recent scholarship on Josephus demonstrates that Josephus clearly knows more about various subjects than he chooses to record (Mason 2016, 25) and that he freely shapes well-known narratives to fit his own narrative plot, the rewritten narratives on biblical scenes being particularly clear examples of this (Feldman 1998). Thus, to take *War* as an example, Josephus's overarching theme is one of tragedy on a national scale. Herod's history, in volume 1, becomes the tragic framing of the impending national tragedy that will occur at the end of the work, a man driven by what should have been virtues to his own destruction (Mason 2016, 29). Thus, Herod's personal story is the preface to the fall of the nation in *War* (Landau 2005, 162).

Rhetoric

This use of Herod's story to foreshadow the eventual tragic fall of the nation over which he was king is not just part of the overall narrative in *Antiquities* and *War*; Josephus links it to rhetorical points within both works. While some modern Josephan scholarship focuses on the question of his ability to write in Greek and questions whether his rhetorical techniques might not be the product of his "assistants" (assuming they were fluent Greek speakers), Josephus is now understood to be a "Creative Greek-language author" (Mason 2016, 25), meaning he has full command not just of the Greek language but also Greek and Roman historiography and its techniques (Landau 2005, 159). Thus, Josephus purposefully models his own works on the works of great Greek historians, employing the same rhetorical flourishes and techniques.

Greco-Roman historiography does not simply narrate events in sequence; authors probe what made great men great and what made nations rise, as well as what made great men stumble and nations fall. These causes were presented as moral, in effect; the fates might let someone attain great heights, but the same person could easily fall because of hubris, vanity, or some other unflattering character flaw. Thus, Josephus narrates Herod's story in a way that highlights the moral points Josephus wishes to emphasize through his tale. Because Herod's story is used to make larger moral points and to foreshadow later events, the figure of the king is roughly shaped in strong colors. The reader feels no pathos for him, as his small figure is carried through a larger-than-life narrative that foreshadows Judea's doom, because the reader never hears of Herod's innermost thoughts or feelings (Landau 2005, 180). When he discusses Herod's feelings, Josephus describes only the strongest emotions: *hubris*, greed, intense grief at Mariamme's death. The reader understands Herod to be governed by his passions, rather

than reason, and realizes this will be his downfall. This focus on the moral takeaway does not mean Josephus was fabricating the story of Herod, but rather that he presents Herod's history fully shaped by larger rhetorical points. In this respect, Josephus was a true Greco-Roman historiographer.

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Conclusion

Josephus's two major treatments of Herod have an authorial setting in Flavian Rome: *War* was written about the time Vespasian's Temple of Peace was being unveiled, *Antiquities* about the time Domitian was adopting the children of Flavius Clemens and Domitilla as successors (Chapter 13). The 70s to the 90s CE witnessed a concatenation of disparate events: the elevation to the throne of Vespasian and his family; the celebration of the emperor's victory over Judean rebels in the construction of a temple to house its spoils; the presence in Rome of Josephus, a learned Jewish priest supported by Vespasian; the publication by that same priest, an ex-general in the revolt against Rome, of the revolt's history and wider Jewish history; the presence in Rome of the most important surviving member of Herod's family, Agrippa II; a liaison between Agrippa II's sister and Vespasian's son Titus, emperor from 79 CE; the subsequent dabbling with Judaism of Flavius Clemens and Domitilla, members of the imperial family. In this complex atmosphere and social setting Josephus wrote about Gaius Julius Herodes, king of the Jews and friend of the Romans. It is not surprising that the story is itself convoluted.

Chronology of Herod's life

Mahieu (2012) discusses extensively the chronology of Herod's reign, making numerous proposals for correcting the "traditional" chronology (e.g. Finegan 1998; Schürer 1973–87, 1, 2). Our chronological conclusions are closer to the traditional dates—especially on the question of Herod's death (Barnes 1974)—though sometimes we have followed Mahieu's proposed dates and sometimes we have gone our own way.

The most critical issue is the calculation of Herod's regnal years. Josephus acknowledges two systems (*War* 1.665; *Ant.* 17.191), without clarifying which scheme he prefers. One scheme begins with the year the

Senate in Rome named Herod king in 40 BCE, the other with the year Herod assumed control of Jerusalem. Mahieu points out that “Herod himself would have reckoned years from 40 bc,” though some of Josephus’s sources may have viewed his rule as beginning after Antigonus’s defeat. This is usually located in 37 BCE, but Mahieu amends this to 36 BCE (Mahieu 2012, 119, 122).

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Mahieu lists several different starting points traceable in Josephus (2012, 180–1), which she uses to create a “chronological backbone for the history of Herod’s reign” (2012, 181).

Dated incidents counting from 40 BCE:

- Founding of Sebaste in the thirteenth year (28/27 BCE)
- Famine in the thirteenth year (28/27 BCE)

Dated events counting from 36 BCE:

- Earthquake in the seventh year (30/29 BCE)
- Augustus’s visit to Syria in the seventeenth year (20/19 BCE)
- Beginning of work on the temple in the eighteenth year (19/18 BCE)
- Completion of Caesarea in the twenty-eighth year (9/8 BCE)

Incidents dated from Augustus’s meeting with Herod in 30 BCE:

- Augustus’s visit to Syria in the tenth year (end 21/20 BCE)
- Beginning of Caesarea’s construction in the tenth year (21/20 BCE)

Four periods relevant to Mahieu’s scheme:

- Hiding of Baba’s sons for twelve years (*Ant.* 15.260), 36–25/24 BCE
- Work on the temple enclosures, eight years (*Ant.* 15.420), 26/25–18 BCE
- Work on the temple building, one year and five months (*Ant.*

- Construction of Caesarea, twelve years (*Ant.* 15.341), 20–8 BCE

Mahieu provides a detailed comparison of her chronology and Schürer's (Mahieu 2012, 205–31). Many dates agree or vary by a few months; other proposed “new” dates—mostly events toward the end of Herod's life—may vary by three or four years. The most significant difference is Herod's death date, with its bearing on the date of Jesus's birth. Mahieu, like some New Testament scholars, prefers to date Herod's death in 1 BCE or 1 CE; we follow Roman historians who tend to prefer a date of 5 or 4 BCE.

Rome's dating schemes, used sometimes by Josephus, allow considerable precision, whether years from Rome's founding, consular years, Olympian years, or regnal years (see Finegan 1998, ## 172–91). One special Jewish dating scheme is sometimes relevant in Herod's story; we refer to sabbatical years—the seven-year Jewish cycle for land to lie fallow—that may coincide with another event, such as hardship, famine relief, or social policy (Finegan 1998, ## 224–49). There are two major studies of sabbatical years, one by Benedict Zuckermann (1866; originally 1857) and another by Ben Zion Wacholder (1973), with Wacholder's calculations one year later than Zuckermann's. We follow Wacholder, who had the benefit of a hundred years of additional evidence. There is still debate about how to apply such data in interpreting Josephus; it may mean, for example, putting Herod's capture of Jerusalem a year later than we had argued in the first edition. In Table I.1, all dates are BCE unless otherwise noted.

Table I.1 Chronology of Herod

	<i>Events in a Judean context</i>	<i>Events in the Roman world</i>
73 BCE	BIRTH OF HEROD THE GREAT to Antipater and Cypros	
73–1		Spartacus's slave revolt in Italy
69	Hyrcanus II high priest 69–66 (king 76–66)	Birth of Cleopatra VII (69–30)
67	Death of Queen Alexandra of Judea (queen 76–67) Herod taken to Petra as a child with his family Hyrcanus II cedes land to Aretas III of Nabatea (85–62)	Pompey's campaign against the pirates
66	Aristobulus II king and high priest, deposes Hyrcanus II (66–33)	First Catiline conspiracy; final defeat of Mithridates
65		Pompey in Syria; end of Seleucid monarchy
64	Sabbatical year (65/64) Hurricane destroys crop in Judea; food shortage after sabbatical year	Rome's war against Pontus ends Rome annexes Seleucid kingdom, creates Province of Syria
63		Cicero aborts Second Catilinarian conspiracy Birth of Octavian (Augustus) Pompey sides with Hyrcanus II
	Aristobulus II defeats Hyrcanus II and Aretas III at Papyron Jerusalem captured by Hyrcanus II and Pompey Hyrcanus II re-appointed high priest and ethnarch (63–40) Antipater sides with Pompey and gains administrative responsibility	Pompey encouraged by Pharisees to suppress monarchy Pompey organizes Rome's eastern provinces (63/62)

Table 1.1 (continued)

	<i>Events in a Judean context</i>	<i>Events in the Roman world</i>
	Aristobulus II at Alexandreion; surrenders to Pompey; exiled	Pompey establishes autonomous cities; Samaritans independent
62	Obodas II (62–57) succeeds Aretas III of Nabatea	
61		Pompey's triumph in Rome
60		Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus form First Triumvirate
58/57	Sabbatical year	
57	Hyrchanus II loses power; Gabinius sets up five <i>synedria</i>	Herod meets Mark Antony
	Malichus I king of Nabatea (57–28)	
57–55	Gabinius defeats revolt of Aristobulus II and his sons against Rome	
56		Birth of Nicolas of Damascus
55	Antipater assists Gabinius in Egypt; procurator (55–43)	Crassus governor of Syria (55–53)
54	Temple of Jerusalem pillaged by Crassus	Parthians defeat Crassus at Carthae
53–51		Cassius governor of Syria
51	Sabbatical year (51/50)	Cleopatra VII rules Egypt
49		Julius Caesar crosses the Rubicon
		Civil war: Pompey vs. Julius Caesar; Caesar declared dictator
48	Antipater rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem	Pompey assassinated
47	Antipater made Roman citizen; procurator; Hyrchanus named ethnarch	Julius Caesar in Egypt, Syria, and Asia
		Sextus Caesar governor of Syria (47–46)
	Caesar gives Joppa and Esdracelon to Judea, returns to Italy	Julius Caesar reinstates Cleopatra as queen of Egypt (47–30)
	Phasael governor of Jerusalem, Herod governor of Galilee	
	Herod puts down revolt of Hezekiah, followed by trial of Herod	
	Herod marries Doris	

46	Herod appointed governor of Coele-Syria by Sextus Caesar	Caecilius Bassus governor of Syria (46-44)
45	Jewish embassy to Caesar results in new concessions	Herod assists Caesar's troops at Apamea
	Birth of Antipater to Herod and Doris	Julius Caesar adopts Octavian
44	Sabbatical year (44/43)	Julius Caesar assassinated (March 15)
		Cassius proconsul of Syria; sells Judeans into slavery (44-42)
43	Antipater poisoned by Malichus	Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus form Second Triumvirate
42	Herod settles affairs in Samaria; goes to Damascus	Herod appointed governor of Coele-Syria by Cassius
	Troubles with Marion of Tyre	Antony and Octavian defeat Brutus and Cassius at Philippi
	Herod betrothed to Mariamme I; divorces Doris	Julius Caesar deified; birth of Tiberius
41	Herod and Phasaël appointed joint tetrarchs	Antony meets Herod in Bithynia
		Antony rejects demands for Herod's ouster, at Daphne and Tyre
40	Parthians invade Palestine: Pacorus and Barzapharnes, with Antigonus	
	Antigonus named king of Judea by Parthians (40-37/36)	
	Jerusalem revolts against Herod and Phasaël	
	Phasaël and Hyrcanus II submit to Barzapharnes	Hyrcanus is disfigured and taken to Parthia; Phasaël commits suicide
	Antigonus appointed high priest	Herod flees via Masada to Alexandria, Rhodes and Rome (first trip)
	Herod named king of Judea, Galilee, and Perea by Senate of Rome	
39	Western Idumea and Samaritis added to Herod's territory	Ventidius Bassus governor of Syria (39-38)
		Mark Antony in east

Table 1.1 (continued)

	<i>Events in a Judean context</i>	<i>Events in the Roman world</i>
	Herod lands at Ptolemais; takes Joppa, Masada, Orhesa	
	Herod attacks Jerusalem; returns to Galilee	
38	Herod takes Sepphoris, Arbela caves	Sossius appointed governor of Syria (38–37) Herod assists Mark Antony at Samosata
	Herod's brother Pheroras rebuilds Alexandreion	
	Herod's brother Joseph killed at Jericho; Herod routs Pappus at Isana	Octavian and Livia marry
37	Herod besieges Jerusalem Herod marries Mariamme I in Samaria	
	Sabbatical year with famine/ food shortage (37/36)	
	Herod purges Sanhedrin	
	Costobar, Herod's brother- in-law, governor of Idumea and Gaza	Antigonus executed by Antony at Antioch
36	Capture of Jerusalem (following Mahieu and Pinegan)	
	Birth of Alexander to Herod and Mariamme I	
	Ananel (from Babylonia) appointed high priest (36–35)	Cleopatra VII gains Ituraca, Samaritis, coastland, parts of Nabatea
		Hyrcanus II freed from Parthian imprisonment
35	Birth of Aristobulus to Herod and Mariamme I	
	Aristobulus III appointed high priest after Ananel deposed	
	Aristobulus III drowned in Jericho pool	
	Ananel re-appointed high priest (35–30)	
	Salome's husband Joseph executed by Herod	
34	Cleopatra visits Jerusalem; gains Jericho and parts of coastal plain	Antony questions Herod on death of Aristobulus at Laodicea

32	War with Nabateans: Dium, Canatha (32-31)	Breach between Octavian and Mark Antony; Herod supports Antony
31	Herod takes Heshbon from Nabateans Earthquake in Palestine (possibly 30/29, Mahieu) Hyrkanus II executed Nabateans victorious over Herod	Octavian and M. Agrippa defeat Antony and Cleopatra at Actium (September 2)
30	Octavian confirms Herod as king of Judea at Rhodes (spring) Herod entertains Octavian in Ptolemais Octavian gives Herod cities of Gadara, Hippos, Samaria, Gaza, Anthedon, Straton's Tower Jesus son of Phiabi appointed high priest (30-24) Sabbatical year (30/29)	Herod helps supply Egyptian campaign; visits Octavian in Egypt Suicides of Antony and Cleopatra; Antony's sons executed Octavian annexes Egypt Herod accompanies Octavian from Egypt to Antioch
29	Execution of Mariamme I Herod ill in Samaria; epidemic in Judea	Obodas III king of Nabatea (30-9) Marcus Tullius Cicero governor of Syria (29-27)
28	Alexandra executed after intriguing for power Salome divorces Costobar; Costobar executed Sons of Baba executed by Herod, after hiding for ten years Famine and plague (28-26; alternatively 25/24) Herod initiates games in Jerusalem	
27	Founding of Sebaste Herod marries Malthace	Senate in Rome passes Acts of Settlement Senate proclaims Octavian Imperator Caesar Augustus (January 16)

Table 1.1 (continued)

	<i>Events in a Judean context</i>	<i>Events in the Roman world</i>
26	Construction of temple enclosures (26/25–18, so Mahieu; see below)	
25	Herod marries Cleopatra of Jerusalem Famine (25/24, alternative date, so Marshak, Rocca)	Herod and Obodas assist Aelius Gallus on expedition to Arabia
24	Herod marries Mariamme II (daughter of Simon, son of Boethos) “Zenodorus affair” (24/23) Herod pacifies and gains Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis	
23	Birth of Archelaus to Herod and Malthace Sabbatical year (23/22) Construction of temple in Jerusalem (see below; 23/22–15/14)	M. Agrippa vice-gerent in the east (23–13) Alexander and Aristobulus (Mariamme I’s sons) to Rome for education Augustus seriously ill Herod visits M. Agrippa in Lesbos
22	Herod marries Pallas Boethos appointed high priest (22–5) Gadara rebels against Herod Remission of one-third of taxes following “lack of crops” Construction of Caesarea Maritima (22–10; Mahieu 20–8)	Gadara sends delegation to M. Agrippa in Lesbos Augustus in Greece and Asia (22–19)
21	Birth of Antipas to Herod and Malthace	Marriage of M. Agrippa and Julia
20	Augustus visits Herod in Galilee and Samaritis (and Judea?) Augustus adds Gaulanitis, Huleitis, and Panias to Herod’s territory	Rome and Parthia agree on spheres of influence Augustus appoints Herod <i>epitropos</i> of Coele-Syria

	Pheroras appointed tetrarch of Perea	
	Birth of Philip to Herod and Cleopatra of Jerusalem	Birth of Gaius Caesar to M. Agrippa and Julia
19	Beginning of work on temple, one year, five months (Mahieu)	M. Agrippa co-regent with Augustus
18	Herod <i>socius et amicus populi romani</i>	Birth of Lucius Caesar to M. Agrippa and Julia
	Herod marries Elpis	
17	Herod's first will names Alexander and Aristobulus	Herod goes to Rome to fetch sons (second trip to Rome)
		Ludi saeculares
		Augustus adopts Gaius and Lucius (M. Agrippa's children)
		M. Agrippa controls the east (17-13)
16	Alexander marries Glaphyra, daughter of the king of Cappadocia	Augustus in Gaul (16-13)
	Aristobulus marries Berenice, daughter of Salome	Herod visits M. Agrippa in Lesbos
	Sabbatical year (16/15)	
15	M. Agrippa makes state visit to Judea	
	Salome and Syllacus fall in love in Jerusalem	
	Household problems (15/14)	
14		Herod joins M. Agrippa's expedition to Black Sea and Pontus
	Herod remits quarter of taxes (after sabbatical year)	Herod intercedes on behalf of Ilium with M. Agrippa
	Herod quarrels with Alexander and Aristobulus	
	Antipater restored to favor	
13		M. Titius appointed governor of Syria (13-10)
		Herod sails to Ionia to see M. Agrippa
	Doris restored to favor	Antipater sent to Rome with M. Agrippa (13-12)
	Herod's second will names Antipater heir	
12		Herod accuses Alexander and Aristobulus before Augustus (third trip)

Table 1.1 (continued)

	<i>Events in a Judean context</i>	<i>Events in the Roman world</i>
	Herod's third will: Antipater; Alexander, and Aristobulus subordinate	Herod, Antipater, Alexander, and Aristobulus reunited; return together Death of M. Agrippa
	Herod breaks open Tomb of David	Augustus gives Herod half of income of Cyprus copper mines
	Herod becomes President of Olympic Games (or 8?)	Augustus becomes Pontifex Maximus
11	Revolt in Trachonitis	
10	Herod imprisons Alexander and Aristobulus	
	Herod accuses Syllaeus before Saturninus	
9	Aretas IV king of Nabatea (9 BCE to 40 CE)	Dedication of Ara Pacis
	Herod invades Nabatea, captures Raeptha	Drusus, Augustus's stepson, dies; funeral in Rome Augustus disciplines Herod and withdraws his right to name successor
	Sabbatical year (9/8)	Herod visits Rome (? fourth trip); Antipas in Rome for education
8	Augustus contemplates ceding Nabatea to Herod	Nicolas of Damascus reconciles Herod and Augustus
	Archelaus of Cappadocia reconciles Herod and Alexander	
7	Alexander and Aristobulus guilty (Berytus); strangled at Sebaste	[Birth of Jesus—probable date]
	Herod's fourth will: Antipater heir with Philip succeeding him	
	Antipater intrigues against his half-brother and his father	
6		Varus appointed governor of Syria (6–4)
	Herod breaks with the Pharisees; executions	Syllaeus affair concluded in Rome
	Archelaus and Antipas return to Jerusalem	
	Antipater takes Herod's fifth will to Rome: Antipater heir	Tiberius retires to Rhodes
	Herod's breach with Pheroras	

5	Pheroras dies; Antipater returns to Judea for trial and imprisonment Herod divorces Mariamme II Herod's sixth will names Antipas sole heir Mattathiah son of Theophilus appointed high priest (5–4)	
4	Joseph son of Ellemos appointed high priest (one day) Joezar son of Boethos appointed high priest Revolt of Judas and Matthias and the "Eagle affair" Eleazar son of Boethos appointed high priest Antipater executed Herod's seventh will: Archelaus, Antipas, Philip, Salome heirs DEATH of HEROD THE GREAT in Jericho, late March	Augustus formally adopts Tiberius

It is difficult to decide on the dates of two significant periods in Table I.1, the construction periods for the temple in Jerusalem and for Caesarea Maritima. The latter is more straightforward. Josephus specifies that Caesarea's construction occupied twelve years (*Ant.* 15.341), though he also says ten years plus a dedication two years later (*Ant.* 16.136), which amounts to much the same thing; the variation suggests he has two sources or two ways of calculating. Proposed absolute dates vary a little, however, with the usual dates being 22–10 BCE (Holum/Raban 1994, 1.279; Levine 1975, 11, 149–50; Richardson 2000, 13). Mahieu, however, pins the start of construction to 21/20 BCE, with a conclusion in 8 BCE (Fritsch & Downey suggest 21–10/9). On the other hand, Kokkinos dates construction a few years earlier, 23–13 BCE (1998, 370–2). We stay with 22–10 BCE.

The Jerusalem temple's construction period is complicated by several factors. (1) Josephus gives two different dates that cannot be reconciled as easily as we suggested in the first edition (Schwartz 1998, 349–51; see also Levine 2002, 224–6). In *War* 1.401 Josephus says, "in the fifteenth year of his reign he restored the temple, . . . new foundation walls, . . . the surrounding area"; in *Ant.* 15.380 he says, "in the eighteenth year of his reign, . . . reconstructing of the temple, . . . enlarging its precincts." (2) Whatever number of stages are posited in the construction process—perhaps four or five stages (pre-construction planning; foundations; enclosures; holy place; remainder of

the project)—both Josephus’s comments appear to allude to the beginning of construction. (3) An inscription referring to the donation of some of the pavement ([Chapter 10](#); see [Figure 10.8](#)) refers to Herod’s twentieth year, which makes the earlier options unlikely (Marshak 2015, 312–15). (4) When Josephus implies extensive planning and coordination prior to construction—design, training priestly workmen, organizing and gathering materials—he does not make precise if those stages fell within or were prior to the stated construction period. We think that the major construction period was, as Marshak and Smallwood suggest, 23/22–15/14 BCE, but we are amenable to the suggestion of an earlier phase—planning and preparation, as Mahieu suggests, rather than construction—in the years following 26/25 BCE.

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Remarkably, Herod’s two largest, most complex, and most deeply symbolic projects overlapped for at least five years, perhaps longer. The important point is not so much the precise dates as the fact that the combination of projects required enormous outlays to buy materials, prepare the sites, demolish existing structures, hire workers, and undertake construction; the period must have stretched Judea’s resources. This prompts a bigger—but unanswerable—question: what economic or social or political factors prompted Herod to begin two such massive projects within such a short time? It is tempting to think there was a need to put large numbers of persons to work on projects of such national significance, though this is speculation. A minor indication, however, that this may have been a factor is that at about this time he remitted a portion of the population’s taxes because of economic hardship (on our reckoning in 22/21 BCE). Another possibility is that his coffers were fuller than they had ever been, that his kingdom was overflowing with ready cash, so the time was ripe. In the end, we do not know why these projects overlap, nor do we know fully how he managed to afford them (see [Chapter 10](#)).

Schematic family tree

A schematic and truncated family tree, limited to Herod’s immediate antecedents and descendants with a focus on his wives and children, may be useful as a handy reference (see Table I.2). We discuss alternative views of the sequence and timing of his marriages in [Chapter 12](#), where we present a full family tree in a different format (see Tables 12.1 and 12.2).

Part I and Part II

The family relationships as described in both the schematic family tree and later in the full family tree, as well as the chronology, are two essential items in constructing a life of Herod. “Herod’s life” is sketched at some length in Part I, which follows a chronological scheme from Herod’s forebears to his death, with the exception of [Chapter 1](#), which introduces him through events at the end of his life. There are many lacunae in his story, some introduced in the interests of brevity and some imposed on us because our sources say nothing. A few incidents in Herod’s life have attracted attention, especially the so-called “massacre of the innocents”; we have tried to avoid the temptation of overemphasizing them.

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[Table 1.2](#) Schematic family tree

Herod of Ascalon (178-?)									
Antipater I/Antipas (148-?)									
Antipater II (113?-43) = Cypros (Nabatea)									
Phallion (105-65)									
Joseph (95-34)									
Phasaël (75-40)									
Herod (73-4) = ten wives									
Joseph (70-38)									
Pheroras (68-5)									
Salome (65-10 CE)									
[wives and children below]									
=Doris (?-?) m 47 and 14	=Marianne I (54-29) m 37	=Niece (?-?) m 29	=Cousin (?-?) m 28	=Malthace (5-4) m 27	=Cleopatra (?-?) m 25	=Mariamme II (?-?) m 23	=Pallas (?-?) m 21	=Phaedra (?-?) m 19	=Eipis (?-?) m 17
Antipater (45-4)	Alexander (36?-7)	?	?	Archelaus (23?-2)	Herod Philip (20?-34 CE)	Philip (22?-?)	Phasaël (19?-4)	Roxana (18?-?)	Salome (17?-?)
	Aristobulus (35?-7)			Antipas (21?-38 CE)	Herod? (18?-4?)				
	Son (33?-?)			Olympias (19?-?)					
	Salampsio (33?-?)								
	Cypros (32?-?)								

Either Part I or Part II may be read first. Part II attends to programmatic elements in Herod's life, aspects that help interpret him more securely and more sensitively or features that provide windows into his character. The "essays" in Part II are essential but not logically connected. There are issues in Herod's life we do not touch on—because of a lack of expertise or inclination—such as viewing Herod through a psychoanalytic lens (Kasher & Witztum 2007). Other more general issues, such as the vexed question of "Romanization," have been left to one side (Richardson 2002, 7–24).

A few words to introduce Part II may be helpful. The Herodian activity that has attracted the most attention in the last two generations has been his building projects (Netzer 2008; Roller 1998; Lichtenberger 1999; Roddaz 2014; Richardson 2004, [part 4](#)), so in [Chapter 9](#), the lengthiest chapter, we consider Herod's brilliant architectural creations and the archaeological investigations that have shaped our understanding (Desjardins & Wilson 2000, 3–32; Richardson 2004, 8–14, 327–45; Rozenberg and Mevorah 2013). This chapter is a key to our interpretation, since we aim to balance evidence from literary texts—dominating Part I—alongside material remains. When Josephus's texts were the primary means to understand Herod, it was difficult—though as Schalit's massive volume (1969) and Vermes's thin book (2014) show, not impossible—for scholars to reach balanced assessments. Literary texts, including those from antiquity, are shaped by the author's conclusions and may provide a skewed picture of their subject. In Herod's case the most effective balance to a literary approach through Josephus's texts is through his architecture. If we think of his buildings as artifacts, we can interpret Herod through "text and artifact" together (Desjardins & Wilson 2000). To repeat an example of a relevant archaeological insight, Herod's private palaces had small pools, usually part of a bath complex, that experts understand as *mikvaot* (Jewish ritual bathing pools): we can confidently say that Herod's religious outlook was more complex than calling Herod "a half-Jew" might suggest.

To understand Herod's success and Rome's interest in harnessing Herod's energy for its interest in the Levant, [Chapter 7](#) considers Hellenism's impact on the region, particularly in local dependent kingdoms, the Decapolis cities, and the Hellenized coastal cities. [Chapter 8](#) describes the geographical sub-regions of the kingdom: Judea, Galilee, Samaritis, Perea, Idumea, and the northeastern areas of Gaulanitis, Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis. We adopt three approaches in treating Herod's finances in Chapter 10: inscriptions, coins, and his "macro-economy"; his economic policies and practices ensured a stable place for Judea in the Roman world, while the wealth of king and

kingdom permitted the massive building activities that offer their vivid insights.

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In [Chapter 11](#) we juxtapose two elites in Herod's Judea: religious and military. Religion was an important factor in all ancient societies, but in few societies was religion as intricately woven into its fabric as in Judaism, and few religions were as widely known for their practices, such as circumcision, dietary restrictions, and aniconism. The hereditary group dominating Judea's religion was a dominant influence in society, though Herod did what he could to bend it to his needs. Alongside the religious elite, Herod fostered a military elite who held another set of levers of power, ones much more easily able to be induced to do his bidding. Matters intrinsic to the Herodian family—factors that influenced the family's behavior and relations—are the subject of [Chapter 12](#), whose critical element is a full family tree that lists all members of the family until about 100 CE. Finally, in a coda, [Chapter 13](#) follows Herod's descendants' interactions with Rome's rulers, with particular interest in climbing the Roman social ladder and assimilating to Roman culture.

Note

- 1 Aryeh Kasher's "free translation" of Schalit's conclusion from the Hebrew original, whose final section is "*Das Ende eines tragischen Irrtums*" ("The End of a Tragic Mistake"); Aryeh Kasher and Eliezer Witztum, *King Herod: A Persecuted Persecutor—A Case Study in Psychohistory and Psychobiography*, trans. by Karen Gold (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), xiv; citing Schalit, *König Herodes*, 671–5; 338–42 of the Hebrew. Quoted here by permission.

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Part I

Herod's life

1 In the end is the beginning

The eagle, or a king's eclipse

On the night of March 13, 4 BCE, there was an eclipse of the moon. On the previous day, in the dénouement of the famous “eagle affair,” the Rabbi and instigator, Matthias, and some students were executed.

A few days earlier, as it became widely known that Herod was dying, Matthias the son of Margalus and Judas the son of Sepphoraëus, teachers with a large following of students and wide popular support, urged that the time was ripe to rid the temple of the one object that defaced it—a great golden eagle. The law of Israel, they said, forbade images and likenesses of living things; and even if death should follow from their actions, the students would gain fame and honor by pulling it down (Josephus, *War* 1.648–55; *Ant.* 17.149–67).

The students acted with bravado as crowds strolled in the temple precincts at midday. Since Herod had placed the eagle above the “great Gate,” Josephus says, the students were in clear view of both the people and the guards. The students got up on a roof, let themselves down with ropes, hacked off the golden eagle (probably a low relief stone sculpture covered with gold leaf), and were promptly arrested by the temple captain with a band of guards. The crowds fled, but forty students were seized along with Judas and Matthias and taken before Herod (Baumgarten 2012). They defended their actions on the basis of Torah, “the laws that Moses wrote as God prompted and taught him,” and happily accepted punishment, even death, for their “piety.”

They were sent to Jericho where Herod was gathering Jewish officials (*Ant.* 17.160). Sick almost to death, Herod accused them and raged against the ingratitude he had faced, then praised his own reconstruction of the temple. The result was not in doubt; Matthias and the main perpetrators were burned alive while others were simply executed. The eclipse of the moon also symbolizes the eclipse of Herod himself as

Herod's illness neared its climax. He had only days to live, and this expectation began to release the tensions buried just beneath the surface of a calm kingdom, tensions motivated to a large extent by religious devotion, attachment to Torah, and hope for a state governed by obedience to God. As Herod's health deteriorated, the courage of those opposed to Herod and his rule increased.

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But how offensive was the golden eagle over the great gate? Had Herod deliberately flaunted a symbol of Roman control before his resistant subjects? Had Jews quietly accepted for some time an image of a living creature without protest? The answer to the last question is probably yes, and they had accepted it for years, not days or months, since the major portion of the work on the temple was completed in 15 BCE. If, as some claim, the eagle was not over the gate but on the Holy Place, it might have been there since the late 20s (Grant 1971, 206–10). In any case, until this incident there seems to have been no strong objection to the eagle's presence and no disability to sacrifice was created by it (Schalit 1969, 734).

Whether the offense was egregious depends on the eagle's location. It is not clear which gate the eagle was over. It may have been the same gate as the one Josephus refers to elsewhere as "Agrippa's Gate" (*War* 1.416), given the symbolism of the eagle, perhaps representing Rome, though this is not said or implied by Josephus; it could, for example, have been a "Nabatean" eagle, with wings pulled back and sitting erect rather than a Roman eagle with wings spread. Still, if the eagle was a Roman eagle above a gate named after Augustus's chief lieutenant, the symbolism would have been doubly powerful. We do not know, however, which gate was Agrippa's. Wilkinson shows the eagle over the doors of the temple proper in a frequently reproduced reconstruction that many scholars simply assume is correct (Wilkinson 1978, 87), but his suggestion is unlikely for several reasons. (1) Herod avoided needless offense and would hardly have spent the huge sums he did on the temple to curry his people's favor only to lose it by putting an eagle right on the Holy Place. (2) To let themselves down by rope from the roof of the Holy Place to hack off the eagle, the students would have had to have profaned the Holy Place by entering it and climbing the inner stair. (3) It is much likelier that the roof in question was the roof of a stoa surrounding the temple, to which access was publicly available. (4) The eagle was probably in a ceremonial location, especially if the gate was the Agrippa Gate, possibly at the bridge to the upper city or near the Antonia fortress (Richardson 2004, chapter 14; see [Figure 10.2](#)).

These considerations suggest that the eagle was not placed over the main door to the Holy Place, an offense almost too great to contemplate for most pious Jews. It was also not likely to have been placed over any one of the several entrances to the Court of Women, though from an architectural point of view that would have been possible, and one gate, Nicanor's Gate, might be considered a great gate. It also seems unlikely that the eagle stood over a gate with symbolic significance such as the Huldah Gates, which led up from the City of David, or the Golden Gate that led in from the Mount of Olives.

This logic leads to the suggestion that the eagle was over the gate above what is now called Wilson's arch, the bridge leading to the temple from the upper city. Its plausibility rests on several factors. (1) This was the route to the temple taken by the upper classes living on the western hill, among whom were persons more tolerant of Hellenism and compliance with Rome. (2) This was also the route from Herod's palace, on the site of what is now the Citadel near the Jaffa Gate, and was thus the natural ceremonial route for distinguished visitors to enter the temple. (3) Such a location would permit the eagle to be placed either on the inside or outside face of the gate itself, though the normal position for symbolic architectural decoration was on the exterior, as demonstrated in the *theatron* at Si'a (near Canatha) surrounding the Temple of Ba'al Shamim, with the same eagle motif, a structure associated with Herod (see [Chapters 10 and 11](#); Butler 1907, 382). (4) In such a location the students would have had access to the stoa's roof from the courtyard (*War* 2.48; *Ant.* 17.259), whence they could get to the sculpture, where they would have been readily visible. (5) The uniqueness of this approach over a bridge at the end of an imposing vista might well justify the term *great* being applied to the gate.

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To the question of whether Herod gave deliberate offense to Jews by the eagle, the answer is yes and no. Offense there certainly was to some Judeans—but the offense was muted by the fact that worshippers could not see the eagle from inside the temple and could easily avoid it from the outside by using another gate. In any case, this decorative motif had ancient precedent in the Temple of Solomon, which was decorated extensively with “cherubim” (1 Kings 6:23–9) or, as Josephus says, “eagles” (*Ant.* 8.74, 81–3).

To sum up: (1) rather than confirming a high degree of Hellenization in Herod's buildings, the incident shows that the eagle was an exception from Herod's normal aniconic practice, an exception the religious

authorities and the populace generally tolerated because it was relatively minor. (2) Still, it triggered religiously motivated dissent among a small and coherent cohort. (3) Herod balanced two competing needs: his commitment to Judaism prompted him to give as little offense as possible, especially in the temple in Jerusalem; but his attachment to Rome caused him to include, in as politically astute a way as possible, a symbol of Roman authority. The “eagle affair” was important both to Herod and his critics: Herod was affronted by the opposition, while his critics saw it as a sign of how near the end was for a ruler who now had only a fragile hold on power.

Death of a king

A short while later Herod died at his winter palace in Jericho of a painful and chronic kidney disease, complicated by Fournier’s gangrene (Hirschman et al. 2004). His symptoms included fever, itching, pains in the colon, swollen feet, inflammation of the abdomen, gangrene of the penis, lung disease, convulsions, and eye problems. After going to Jericho to try those accused in the “eagle affair,” he then went to the hot springs on the east shore of the Dead Sea at Callirrhoe. All to no avail; the end was near.

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Josephus’s accounts are very dramatic; in what follows we prefer *War* 1.656–73 plus 2.1–100 over *Ant.* 17.168–323, though the latter is fuller. It has been debated whether all the events can be fitted into the time available; we think it is possible, if tight. When Herod saw no improvement from his visit to the hot springs, he despaired of recovery. He first distributed fifty drachmas to each soldier, with more going to commanders and friends. Then, when he returned to Jericho, he ensured that there would be an outpouring of grief at his death by gathering the elite of Jewish society together in the hippodrome (presumably Josephus means those gathered at the time of the “eagle affair”), closing the gates, and instructing his sister Salome—who had stuck by him through thick and thin—and her husband Alexas to execute them at his death.

First, a subplot concerning Herod’s eldest son Antipater had to be played out. The relations of father and son had been very volatile; at this time Antipater was under sentence of death, a judicial decision confirmed by Augustus in Rome.¹ But then a letter arrived, according to Josephus, stating that if Herod were inclined merely to banish Antipater, the Emperor was agreeable.

At this stage of events Herod despaired so much over his health—he was in his seventieth year and acutely ill—that he tried to kill himself with a paring knife. His cousin Achiab (Kokkinos 1998, 153–5), who was attending him at the time, prevented him from carrying out this desperate act. The incident brought such a cry from those present that others in the palace, including Antipater in his detention room, thought that Herod had died. Antipater, filled with hope, thought he had outlasted his father and tried to bribe his jailer to free him. But the jailer went to Herod’s bedside and told him of Antipater’s bribery attempt, so Herod ordered Antipater’s immediate execution and burial at Hyrcania, the nearest and most notorious of his desert fortresses. Herod immediately rewrote his will. He survived Antipater by only five days.

The date of the executions, and following that the date of Herod’s death, are linked to the eclipse of the moon “that same night” (*Ant.* 17.167; Schürer 1973–87, 1.326–9). March 13 in 4 BCE, which we prefer following Schürer and others, is not the only possible date. Barnes insists that Herod’s death was in either 5 or 4 BCE, but he prefers 5 BCE. Another proposal, 1 BCE, has been supported by Filmer (1966) and Martin (1978). After discussing other suggested dates, Mahieu comes to her preferred date of 1 CE (Mahieu 2012, 235–87, 289–358). It seems counter-intuitive that on an important historical event with considerable evidence of various kinds there would be a difference of five years or more on the correct date, especially when there is substantial agreement on the dating of events during the majority of Herod’s reign. One reason, it may be suspected, for the sometimes passionate debates over the correct dating is that the date of Herod’s death has implications for the date of Jesus’s birth, a by-product of the date of Herod’s death (see [Chapter 13](#)). The issues are complex and an extensive consideration of them here would lead too far astray.

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Before it was widely known that he had expired, Salome dismissed the soldiers guarding the Jericho hippodrome and sent home the notables being held hostage. She then gathered the soldiers and whatever crowd she could into the hippodrome, where Ptolemy, Herod’s chief financial minister, read a letter from Herod to the soldiers, asking them to be faithful to his successor. Ptolemy also read Herod’s new will, which trifurcated his kingdom: Archelaus was to be king of Judea, Antipas tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip tetrarch of Trachonitis and the adjacent regions. Since the Emperor had to confirm these dispositions—after granting Herod the privilege of naming his own successor in ca. 12 bce, Augustus withdrew it in 9 BCE (see [Chapter 6](#))—Ptolemy was to take

Herod's signet ring and his will to Rome for official action.

As everyone congratulated Archelaus, he set about making his father's funeral arrangements, having just looked after the funeral of his half-brother Antipater, no doubt in both cases with relief or pleasure. The royal jewels were displayed; Herod was laid out in purple grave clothes on a bier of gold decorated with precious gems, wearing a diadem of gold on his head, with a gold crown above that and holding a scepter in his hand. These accoutrements underlined that Herod was king of Judea and had been for over thirty-five years. The funeral procession included Herod's surviving children, first; then his other relatives; then his personal bodyguard, the Thracian regiment, the German regiment, and the Galatian regiment, all in battle dress; and then the rest of the army. Five hundred personal servants and freedmen followed carrying funeral spices. This impressive procession carried the funeral bier 25 miles to Herodium, Herod's fortified palace on the edge of the Judean wilderness, which had been prepared with a mausoleum (see [Chapter 9](#)), where, in Netzer's view, Herod was buried in a sarcophagus within a handsomely designed tiered mausoleum, located on a shoulder of the upper mound of Herodium (Rozenberg & Mevorah 2013, 240–77; see [figures 1.1, 1.2](#)). When Netzer excavated the structure in 2007, he believed the mausoleum and sarcophagus had been deliberately demolished, probably during the 66–74 CE revolt when revolutionaries occupied Herodium. Ironically, Netzer died in a fall at Herodium in 2010.

Family squabbles in Rome

So ended Rome's most successful attempt to impose order on Judea. From that point on Rome's arrangements for keeping Judea pacified were, from both points of view, less satisfactory. The problems that led up to the revolts of 66 CE and 132 CE were in part the result of the longings for self-determination spawned under Herod among those who resisted the Idumean "usurper," and in part the result of Rome's inability to understand Jewish convictions and aspirations. The issues were complex: the Hasmonean revolt, originally an anti-Hellenism revolt, and the Hasmoneans' subsequent gradual Hellenization account for many of the fissiparous groups that developed during the second century BCE. It seems that relatively few dissident groups arose during the Herodian period; most came after (e.g., Zealots, Sicarii, Baptists) or before (e.g., Pharisees, Sadducees, Qumran; see [Chapter 13](#); Goodman 1987; Fenn 1992).

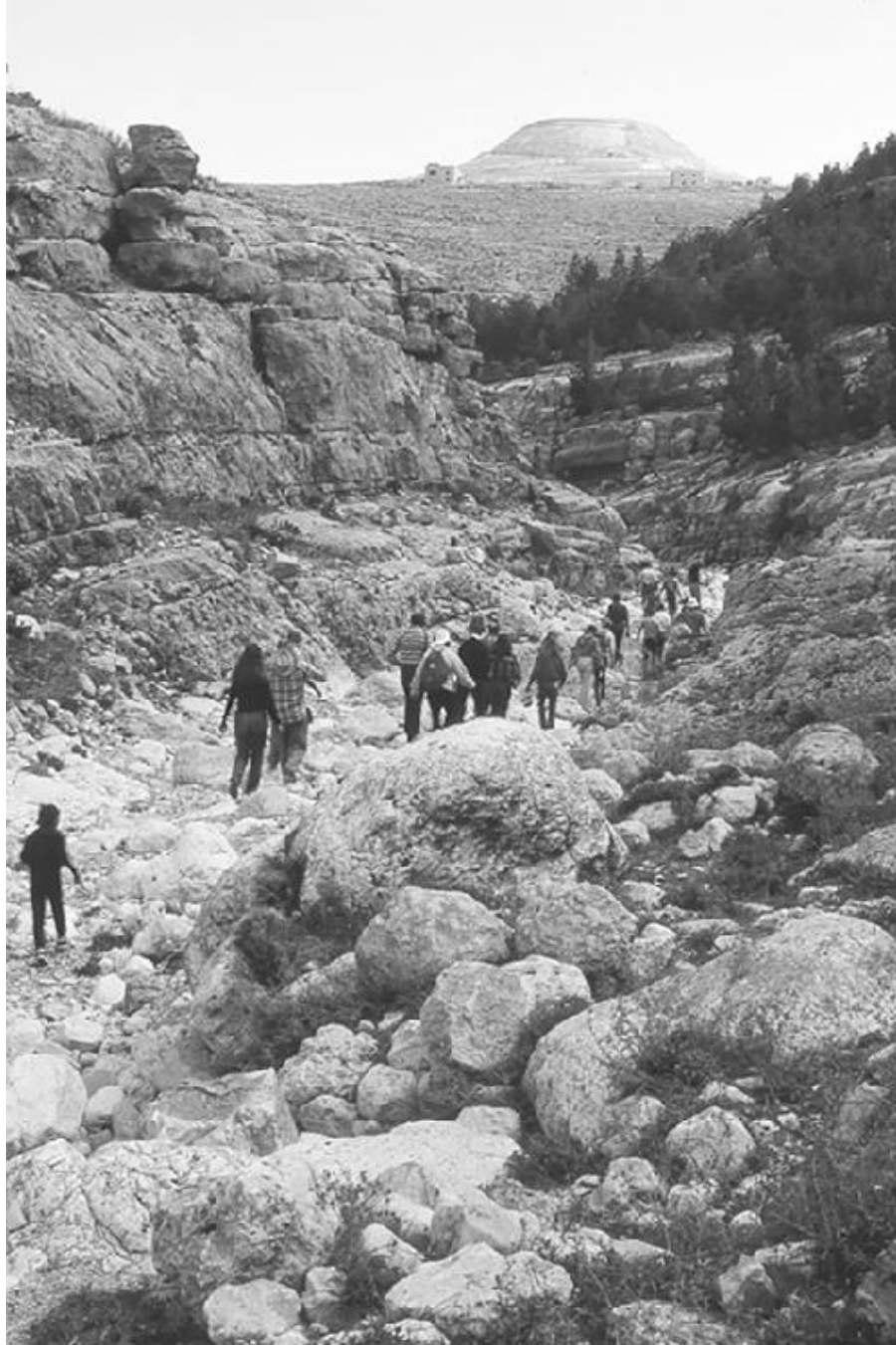


Figure 1.1 Herodium was one of only two structures that Herod named after himself. Its design—which included an upper palace, a lower palace, and a mausoleum—deliberately exaggerated the height of the small hill on which it sat. From Wadi Khareitun (Nahal Teqoa) its outstanding place in the landscape is

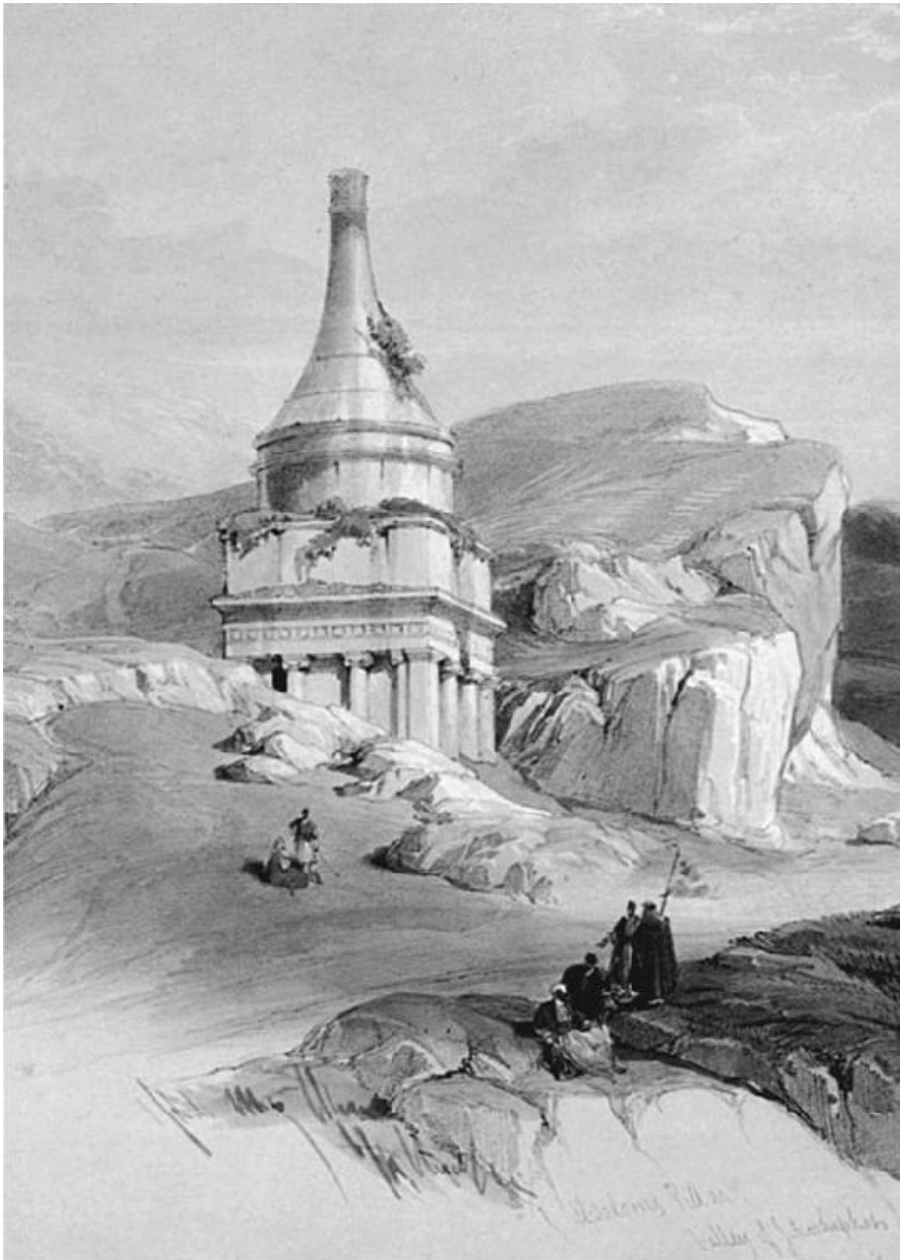


Figure 1.2 A nineteenth-century lithograph by David Roberts of the tomb or “Pillar of Absalom,” dated to the late first century BCE. When Ehud Netzer excavated an equally sophisticated

mausoleum in 2007 on the northeastern slope of Herod's palace-fortress at Herodium, designed in a similar architectural idiom, he claimed it as Herod's burial place. Since his initial publication (and his death in 2010), some think Netzer moved too quickly in his claim.

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When Augustus divided the kingdom he did so under exceedingly awkward circumstances (Millar 1994, 27–9, 337–66). The chief members of Herod's court had traveled to Rome to argue their cases before Augustus. There was no agreement on what to recommend; indeed, many of the key persons changed their views along the way. Two of the three main beneficiaries vied for sole rule or at least for the largest piece of the pie; the third played a waiting game. The decision was almost a *fait accompli*, since Herod's will had been read out at Jericho, and Archelaus had already begun to act as if he were king. To complicate matters, there were earlier and quite different wills (see [Chapter 12](#)).

Archelaus botched things in the first few days of his reign. After the requisite mourning period and a large funeral feast for the multitudes, several requests were made: lighten personal taxes, remove duties on manufactured goods, and release prisoners. When he acceded to these suggestions, stepped-up new requests quickly followed: punish those recently honored by Herod, including those responsible for the executions of the students involved in the “eagle affair,” and replace the high priest with one not tarred with Herod's brush, a priest of greater piety and purity. These demands were too much for Archelaus, trapped by his earlier too-ready acquiescence. He became upset and sent his general to tell those pressuring him to ease up. As matters escalated, just as the Passover feast with its huge crowds was upon them, the crowds noisily mourned the loss of Judas and Matthias, while Archelaus instructed soldiers to keep the crowds quiet. The confrontation got out of hand, unintentionally it seems, and many Passover pilgrims (3,000, according to Josephus) were killed.

These events poisoned the atmosphere as members of Herod's court left for Rome; Josephus says some people changed their minds over the succession as a result of this confrontation since it showed Archelaus's unsuitability to rule.

The scene in Rome when the participants arrived was tense. The Senate assembled, with Augustus present, along with his own heir,

Gaius. Gaius, or Caligula, was Augustus's adopted son—actually his grandson, the child of his daughter Julia and her husband Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa. Augustus had received written depositions from some of the major actors in the drama: from Sabinus, procurator of Syria, accusing Archelaus and lauding Antipas; from Salome and her family, also accusing Archelaus; from Archelaus himself, providing confirmation of his claim; from Ptolemy, reckoning up Herod's accounts and handing over Herod's signet ring; and from Varus, governor (*legatus*) of Syria.

Present at this hearing were Archelaus and Antipas, children of Malthace (Kokkinos 1998, 223–35), with their aunt, Salome (Kokkinos 1998, 177–92; Ilan 1996, 115–25). Philip (a half-brother of Archelaus and Antipas), who had been left at home to tend to matters, arrived late, going to Rome only at Varus's suggestions (*War* 2.82–3; *Ant.* 17.303). Also present were Nicolas of Damascus, Herod's chief adviser; Ptolemy of Damascus, Nicolas's brother and Herod's chief economic minister; Irenaeus, an orator retained to speak for Antipas; and Antipater, Salome's son, speaking mainly against Archelaus. Though Salome and others had promised to support Archelaus, in fact they disliked him and transferred their support to Antipas; still, their first preference, according to Josephus in a surprising aside, was for autonomy (*autonomia*; Schwartz 2002, 76–9) under the protection of a Roman official (*Ant.* 17.299–303, 314).

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The forces were neatly balanced. Archelaus, named king in Herod's last will, was supported by Nicolas and Ptolemy and by his half-brother Philip; this support was offset by the strong opposition of most of the rest of the family and by Sabinus. Antipas, named second in his father's will, had been sole heir in an earlier will; he was supported by most family members, perhaps lukewarmly, and by Sabinus (*War* 2.20–2). These were the main combatants. Some, however, suggested local autonomy under the Syrian governor, an obvious and viable possibility since dependent kingdoms, such as Judea under Herod, were usually integrated into the provincial system after they had been brought more fully under Roman culture and practices.

Having considered the depositions, Augustus convened the hearing. First on his feet was Antipater, Salome's son, first cousin of the claimants. Like Herod's own son Antipater, executed ten years earlier, this Antipater was named after his great-grandfather. He was married to his first cousin, Cypros, daughter of Herod and Mariamme I, the

Hasmonean princess and was thus doubly interested in the succession. Curiously, he figures in the story only at this point. Antipater made four points, attempting to undercut Archelaus's claims: (1) Archelaus, in an act of *lèse-majesté* that disqualified him since the Emperor made such decisions (Jones 1967, 66–7), had preempted Augustus's decision by acting as if he were king; (2) Archelaus had encouraged unrest by appearing to mourn his father but secretly carousing at night; (3) as his grotesque butchery of pilgrims in the temple showed, he was cruel, a character flaw Herod had recognized by not giving him much hope of succession; (4) when Herod wrote his final will he was not of sound mind. Other relatives testified to the truth of these claims.

Herod's adviser and historian, Nicolas (Wacholder 1962; Parmentier & Barone 2011), defended Archelaus. Archelaus's actions were a sign of his loyalty, Nicolas said, for those killed in the temple had been enemies both of Archelaus and of Augustus. Further, the last will was actually a very sensible document, for the naming of Archelaus as successor was just as appropriate as the naming of Augustus as executor of the will, though this was the Emperor's usual role. Then Archelaus fell on his knees before Augustus, who raised him up and said that he deserved to succeed his father. Nevertheless, Augustus made no decision and, according to Josephus, was of two minds: should he appoint one person only or divide the power so that the combatants would each have some support? This, of course, was the crucial question.

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Events intervened. Varus, the Syrian governor, reported a major revolt (the *Talmud* calls it "Varus's War") at the feast of Pentecost, when large crowds were again in Jerusalem. Pilgrims from Galilee and Idumea had camped north of the temple, those from Jericho and Perea had camped to the south, and others from Judea had camped to the west. Whether by accident or design the Jews had Sabinus's troops surrounded. In an initial clash in the temple some of the colonnades were burned and the Romans looted much of the temple treasure. The Jews then surrounded Herod's palace, joined by deserters from the royal troops. There were also uprisings in the countryside: in Idumea with Herodian veterans as the main corps; at Sepphoris led by Judas, son of the brigand chief Hezekiah (Herod had made his early reputation in part by defeating Hezekiah); in Perea where one mob, led by the royal slave Simon, burned the Winter Palace at Jericho, and another burned the royal palace at Betharamphtha; and in Judea, where Athronges and his four brothers led a mob. The wide distribution of these uprisings—Jerusalem, Judea, Galilee, Perea, and Idumea—threatened the stability of the

eastern empire (Goodman 1987, [chapter 4](#); Fenn 1992, [chapter 6](#)).

Varus marched from Antioch to Ptolemais (Acco), on to Sepphoris (which he burned), then to Sebaste (which he saved, because it had not risen in revolt), and then up to Jerusalem (after plundering Arus, Sappho, and Emmaus). The pilgrims melted away at this display of Roman might, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem disclaimed all responsibility. Varus rounded up the ringleaders throughout the country and brought them to Jerusalem where he crucified 2,000.

A particularly troublesome Idumean rebel force decided—on the advice of Achiab, the cousin who had been with Herod at the time of his death—to surrender, and most were pardoned. Some Idumean relatives of Herod’s were sent to Rome in chains and executed by Augustus for fighting against a king of their own family. Their identity is not known.

In Rome, Archelaus—now joined by Philip, who had become more independent and was vying for a share of the pie—was confronted by a delegation of fifty Judean ambassadors, supported by Rome’s Jewish community. As some of Herod’s family had done earlier, these Judean ambassadors petitioned Augustus to unite Judea with Syria, as long as there was a degree of separate administration. This compromise solution showed their loyalty to Rome, they claimed, and their willingness to submit to Roman authority, and it would give them a safeguard against tyranny. Nicolas loyally refuted the charges they made against the late king’s conduct and accused the Judeans of anarchism and persistent disloyalty. He linked this with a denunciation of Archelaus’s relatives, who had swung over to the other side.

Another delegation must have appeared, though Josephus ignored it. The information comes from a fragment of Nicolas of Damascus’s history (fragment 5; *FHG* III, 354 = fragment 136, 9), which summarizes in paragraphs 8–11 the contents of the negotiations. Some cities of the Decapolis (see [Chapter 8](#)) asked to be attached to Syria, successfully it seems, for Gadara, Hippos, and Gaza were detached from Judea, an additional complexity.

Augustus rewarded Herod’s quarter-century of loyalty in 4 BCE by confirming Herod’s will, though with several minor changes. He held back from giving Archelaus the status, dignity, and role of “king,” naming him ethnarch of Judea, Samaritis, and Idumea, including the important cities of Sebaste and Caesarea Maritima, both lavishly built

by Herod. The title “ethnarch” implied that Archelaus ruled a “people,” even though his peoples were disparate. Augustus named Antipas tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, two fertile areas with mixed populations, separated both by the Jordan River and by two cities of the Decapolis. Augustus allotted Philip the northeast section of the kingdom: Trachonitis, Batanea, Gaulanitis, Auranitis, and the parts of Iturea around Panias, soon to be re-christened Caesarea Philippi (see [Chapter 7](#)).

Two other cities of the Decapolis that earlier had been granted to Herod—Hippos (Susita) and Gadara (Umm Qeis), east and southeast respectively of the Sea of Galilee—were transferred to the province of Syria, as was Gaza, far to the southwest. In a typically Roman action (Ilan 1996, 170), Herod’s sister Salome was rewarded with control of a new city in the Jordan valley, Phaselis (named after her eldest brother), and two important cities near the coast, Jamnia (Yavneh, where scribal learning later flourished) and Azotus (Ashdod).

Josephus subtly underscores, as he had earlier, the importance of the financial element and the potentially destabilizing effect of any decision that left principal players without adequate resources. All the heirs received an income sufficient to keep them in the style to which they had become accustomed: Archelaus 400 talents, Antipas 200, Philip 100, and Salome 60. These figures approximated the relative wealth of each area (see [Chapter 11](#)) and their total approximated Herod’s tax base. In addition, Augustus confirmed dowries for two other daughters and arranged their marriages. Augustus also, in an unusually generous mark of fondness for Herod, redistributed among Herod’s family the 1,000 talents Herod willed him, keeping only a few sentimental items for himself. Whether Livia kept her 500 talents, we are not told.

This division of the kingdom, predicated on an inability to select one trustworthy person, intensified the problems of the next century and a half. Augustus acceded to Herod’s last-minute wishes, perhaps unwisely, and then complicated matters by subdividing the kingdom still more.

Augustus’s indecision

This short period mirrored the turbulence of Herod’s reign and it gives insight into some important themes in Herod’s life and career: social unrest, financial issues, religion as a rallying point, unbridled ambition, distrust within the family, Roman failure to understand Judea, Rome’s uncertainty over how to handle the Levant, and opportunism of the surrounding peoples.

The preference for the “Syrian option” expressed by several disparate factions—family members around Salome, the Judean delegation (instructed and sent by Varus, *War* 2.80; *Ant.* 17.300), Rome’s Jewish community, and, not surprisingly, the independent delegation from the Decapolis—was a reaction to Herod’s strong centralist policy, though it may seem counter-intuitive that such disparate groups preferred increased attachment to Rome through the provincial system.

Judea had achieved a place of influence in international affairs, buttressing one end of the Roman Empire; it should have troubled Augustus that various groups preferred direct Roman rule—albeit with local autonomy—to a dependent kingdom. Herod’s long, prosperous, and relatively peaceful reign had not persuaded all the population that this form of governance was preferable. When the Judean delegation argued for inclusion in Syria, were they motivated by dislike of Herod or by preference for religious self-determination over home-rule, an unstated issue lurking below the surface? The Syrian option made sense to the delegation, though it may have made less sense to family members. The approach was less concerned for “autonomy of the people” (as Josephus reports)² than an increase in religious self-determination and a return to a more theocratic state, even if theocratic principles were limited to a narrower sphere focused on cult and law.

Ironically, this Syrian option could have played into the hand of Augustus, whose principles might have led him to convert Judea into a Roman province or to include it within Syria. In either case the region would have had more direct Roman rule, as had occurred with Galatia on the death of Amyntas in 25 BCE, when it ceased to be a dependent kingdom and was created as a new province, or Paphlagonia on the death of Deiotarus Philadelphus when it was added to Galatia. But Augustus did not play the card handed him. Perhaps the uprisings led him to conclude that Judea was still too troubled to be rolled into the provincial system, that more time was needed under a strong dependent king before absorbing it. But if so, he faltered at the crucial moment, for the settlement represented a weakening of Herod’s strong rule.

By dividing the kingdom, Augustus instead took a risky course of action. Augustus, the master of *Realpolitik*, failed to avert familial rivalries. Relations between Antipas and Archelaus were close to impossible, and Salome’s change of heart to support Antipas against Archelaus led to further tensions, for the cities she inherited were nominally in Archelaus’s area. Only Philip emerged unscathed from the

infighting. Augustus's decision to confirm the basic outlines of Herod's last will is just a little surprising, and if that will was an act of desperation on Herod's part, it was extremely unwise from Rome's vantage point.

The role of Augustus's representatives in Syria is obscure. Why did Sabinus, the procurator responsible for financial matters, support Antipas? Why did Varus, the governor responsible for political and military affairs, support Archelaus and then Philip? Romans on the scene disagreed in their assessments of the three claimants, but to what extent was this based on the claimants' different abilities or characters? Herod's earlier judgment in naming Antipas his sole heir may have been astute, as was the decision of Salome and others who shifted their support to Antipas, for Augustus deposed Archelaus less than ten years later (in 6 CE) while Antipas survived as tetrarch of Galilee and Perea until 39 CE when he too was deposed. Philip, likely the ablest of the three, continued to rule Gaulanitis, Auranitis, and Trachonitis until he died in 34 CE.

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The problems of the next generation were exacerbated partly by family infighting and partly by a divided kingdom, but mostly by the inherent uncertainties of a weak solution. None of the brothers had a sufficiently large region to be a major force in the Levant, and none was in a position to extend that base by absorbing others' allocations, given Augustus's decisions in 4 BCE. When Augustus deposed Archelaus following the complaints of Judeans and Samaritans, he allocated Judea neither to Antipas nor to Philip, though both were ruling moderately well. Instead he chose another confusing course of action—to annex Judea and govern it from Rome via Syria as a second-class province.

The settlement throws light on Rome's evaluation of Herod. Although Augustus's decision to divide the kingdom may have been partly political, it must also have been based on his personal knowledge of the three main contenders. At the same time, it is helpful to notice that Augustus was trying to settle his own succession and to fashion his own dynasty at just this time: Tiberius had gone into retirement, Gaius had been introduced to public life, and Lucius—his younger grandson—was soon to be introduced. Such familial concerns may not have influenced Augustus directly when it came to the turbulent eastern border, with its especially volatile Jewish peoples (Bowersock 1998, 45, 54). But like his own attempts to shape the future succession, the Judean settlement was fragile. The popular revolts that followed Herod's death while the rival

claimants were still in Rome cannot be attributed to Augustus's decision, for at the time they broke out Augustus had not made up his mind. But they were a sign of political and social unrest, exacerbated by the stupidity of Archelaus in his first few days of *de facto* rule. Once started, the revolts developed a life of their own, with leaders searching for control or aggrandizement. These revolts prefigure the revolts of 6 CE under Judas and Zadok (see Acts 5:37; War 2.56) and the much more destructive revolts of 66–74 CE and 132–5 CE (Hengel 1989; Horsley 1987; Horsley & Hanson 1985). A wise, strong successor to Herod, with a different style, might have settled the issues in such a way that these later revolts would not have begun. One might even argue that the Diaspora, calm during Herod's reign, would have had no occasion to revolt in 115–17 CE had the decision in 4 BCE been different.

Augustus's decision must have been based on advice from Varus, governor of Syria, and Sabinus, procurator. Varus's views were complicated: Josephus says that Philip had come from Syria

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at the urging of Varus to aid the cause of Archelaus, to whom Varus was very friendly, and also to ensure he obtained a share of the royal power in the shift of rulers, for Varus saw a partition coming due to the many who desired autonomy.

(*Ant.* 17.303)

Varus was either hedging his bets or playing one side against the other. In either case, he was genuinely more optimistic about Philip, the least ambitious brother. Still, Archelaus, Philip, and Antipas had all been to Rome for their education, and had become almost members of the Imperial family, so Augustus would have had his own independent opinion of each.

Financial considerations may have played a part in Augustus's decision to accept a divided kingdom. (1) Josephus implies that Herod's many children, as well as his sister Salome, needed support. An assured income for the children would contribute to political stability, because an aggrieved claimant would make less trouble if comfortably well off. In this respect the settlement was a success. (2) Most Jews voluntarily accepted their religious obligations to support the temple and the priests through both the general temple tax and the tithe and first-fruit offerings (Sanders 1992, [chapter 9](#)). Since there was no tax credit for religious taxes paid, they also paid state-imposed head and property taxes as well as local taxes. It is difficult to assess accurately the net effect of these taxes; while many peasants may have been in a state of not-so-genteel

poverty, the scholarly tendency has been to be less negative about Judea's economic well-being. There is little direct evidence of endemic poverty or of conditions that made revolt the only recourse. (3) Herod's Keynesian economic policies had ameliorated taxation effects; he pumped large amounts of money, often his own, into the economy to keep the country at work. His building projects scattered throughout the kingdom helped to create a measure of prosperity in most parts of the country. When things were particularly bad because of natural disaster, he remitted taxes to keep money flowing. In general, the economy was healthy at his death (see [Chapter 11](#)).

Religion may also have played a part in Augustus's decision, though its role was more likely negative than positive. The flames of religion motivated none of the children; all were like their father in not seeing Judaism in exclusive terms. Augustus might have eliminated from contention anyone who showed too much enthusiasm for Judaism, for while he tolerated its monotheism, he was not inclined to increase its sense of importance or its degree of autonomy. He probably read the Jewish delegation's proposal of inclusion in Syria as a veiled form of limited self-rule by which Judea would be administered through their own Jewish officials. A system was in place that included courts and the temple hierarchy, though the system had been frequently overlooked during Herod's reign. That system could administer the laws of the country and exercise an appropriate range of penalties and judgments in accord with Torah (Richardson et al. 1991). The Judean delegation looked for a solution to reduce the influence Herod had had on Judea's religious life through his appointment of high priests and his sidestepping of the courts. It was precisely this religious implication—not openly expressed but obvious—that Augustus was unwilling to accept, rejecting any solution that encouraged a strong religious party. Ironically, his decision encouraged stronger religious parties; not by accident, Josephus puts the rise of the Zealots in 6 CE when settlements based on religious grounds had been frustrated.

The two heirs who could have combined a strong political solution and a traditional religious outlook, Alexander and Aristobulus, had been executed three years earlier. They had in their favor Hasmonean descent through their mother Mariamme I as well as personal popularity (*Ant.* 16.395–404). But these flaws proved to be fatal in Herod's view, and likely would have been fatal in Rome's view, had they survived. Their maternity gave them the royal blood that Herod lacked and the claim of being descendants of an accepted high priest. By contrast, the

mother of Archelaus and Antipas was Malthace, a Samaritan woman, a fact that must have cast a deep shadow on their suitability for office in the eyes of many, while Philip's mother was Cleopatra of Jerusalem, of whom nothing is known, though her name is suggestive of Hellenistic origins (Kokkinos 1998, 255–40; see [Chapter 12](#)).

Augustus may have been influenced by his high personal regard for Herod, though at this stage it was seriously eroded because of Herod's bad judgment and vindictiveness, not to mention the delusions of his final illness. Nevertheless, Augustus depended on Herod to maintain his southeastern flank, and his regard for Herod prompted him to hear out the various parties as he made up his mind. One factor in his decision may have been an inclination to accept Herod's wishes, no matter how desperate they were.

There is another factor. The surviving children were young to be given full control; we calculate that Archelaus was about nineteen, Antipas about seventeen, and Philip probably only sixteen, though Kokkinos (1998, 245) calculates each was several years older (see [Chapter 12](#)). Augustus must have felt unable to make a definitive decision before these young rulers had proven themselves; by appointing all three he was biding his time to see how they behaved under pressure, possibly intending later to elevate one of them to kingship.

The delegations' evaluations

The Decapolis delegation's brief has not been preserved, but one can imagine the main lines of argument. (1) The cities were created free. (2) They belonged to the Hellenistic–Roman world, not the world of Judaism and the Levant. (3) Herod had exploited them, with the resulting loss of stature and direct connection with Rome. Thus, it would have been claimed, Rome served itself best by restoring them to the status of free cities, outposts of Roman civilization, and a bulwark against Parthian influence.

The Judean delegation's (and also Rome's Jewish delegation's) attitude toward Herod can be inferred from Josephus's description. The Judean delegation focused on Archelaus because he was king-designate in his father's will and his soldiers had killed pilgrims in the temple. Philip's role in the confrontation is unclear. Josephus singles him out for special comment but fails to give him a part other than that suggested by Varus

—to cooperate with Archelaus (whom Varus was also supporting) if the decision seemed to be heading toward the selection of one successor, and to snatch a share of the prize if it was a split decision.

The Judean delegation's presentation fell into three parts: a diatribe against Herod, a diatribe against Archelaus, and a plea to be united with Syria. This last point, no doubt prompted by Varus, was calculated to appeal to Augustus. There were added protestations of loyalty: the Judeans were not seditious when well governed and were perfectly willing to recognize that Rome exercised *de facto* authority in the East, as long as that exercise of authority was just, humane, and tolerant of Judea's distinctions. About Archelaus they needed first to say that they had readily received him as king (a sly reference to his presumptuousness?) and had prayed for a successful reign as they mourned Herod (a disingenuous claim belied by their earlier denunciation of him). As events turned out, however, Archelaus's brutal slaughter of Jews in the temple showed he was unfit to rule.

Of most interest in Josephus's account are the three main accusations against Herod. (1) Herod was the most savage tyrant that had ever lived. He had, it was claimed, executed many and tortured more, including whole cities, and his reign of terror forced them to fall into passive subservience—almost slavery—with a hint that they should have revolted against him. (2) Herod had adorned foreign cities by pillaging his own cities, reducing earlier prosperity to poverty. (3) Herod had deprived Jews of their ancestral laws so that now the Jewish people were “lawless.” In other words, he had prevented Torah from being applied to the political, religious, and cultural life of Judea as it should have been, thus eroding the place of the Law of Moses. These accusations are a fair summary of what a religiously motivated delegation may have said to Augustus. That Josephus allowed these criticisms to occupy such a dramatic place in his narrative, with only the skimpiest of indications of Nicolas's rejoinder, is striking, for Josephus must be drawing on Nicolas, and Nicolas had a full account of his rejoinders. Josephus simply chose to let the accusations stand in more or less the form they reached him.

The charges can be used as a basis of a preliminary evaluation of Herod. Their first accusation of tyranny and extreme cruelty is correct. Instances abound of solitary and arbitrary rule, of whimsical decisions that suited his needs with little thought of others. This popular judgment, however, needs to be qualified. On the one hand, cruel and tyrannical acts were endemic in virtually all rulers of the period; Augustus could be faced with similar charges and his successors even more so. On the other, Herod was faced with his subjects' “anarchic tendencies and habitual disloyalty to their kings” (to use Nicolas's

words), so that, to be worthy of Augustus's confidence, Herod had to be decisive and often harsh in removing troublemakers.

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The second accusation also contained an element of truth. Herod beautified many foreign cities, including cities within his own realm that observant Jews might treat as if they were foreign cities. There was more than sufficient evidence of the accuracy of this basic observation. But linking Herod's beautification of cities and Judean poverty was almost certainly false. Herod spent far more money in his own lands than he did in any foreign ventures; the list of projects is tipped heavily in favor of Judea and the adjacent areas that formed part of his own domain ([Chapter 9](#), [Table 9.1](#)). He was generous to other parts, often in areas in the Diaspora where there were sizable Jewish communities, but this generosity did not impoverish Judea. Employment was high, international trade was strong, and tariffs and duties brought in substantial amounts, even if much of the money went into Herod's or others' pockets ([Chapter 10](#)). Of course, there were huge imbalances between the rich and the poor, and there was social unrest—much of it an expression of the poverty of the underprivileged. Judea was much like other parts of the Empire.

Later on in his narrative Josephus discusses Agrippa I, driving a wedge between Herod's character and his grandson's, saying that Herod "had an evil nature, relentless in punishment and unsparing in action against the objects of his hatred. It was generally admitted that he was on more friendly terms with Greeks than with Jews." He contrasts Herod's building activities at home and abroad:

he adorned the cities of foreigners by giving them money, building baths and theatres, erecting temples in some and porticoes in others, whereas there was not a single city of the Jews on which he deigned to bestow even a minor restoration or any gift worth mentioning.

(*Ant.* 19.329)

Josephus himself provides evidence to refute this unexpected accusation; as he goes on to note a few paragraphs later, Agrippa I also built in foreign cities such as Berytus (*Ant.* 19.335; [Chapter 9](#)).

The delegation's third accusation charged Herod with promoting "lawlessness," probably Torah disobedience. Again, the accusation is partially true. Herod undercut the authority of the high priest; much of the time he ignored the courts; he built cultural and athletic buildings

even in Jerusalem that symbolized an entente with Hellenism; he even built Temples to Roma and Augustus, and perhaps contributed to other temples (Chapter 9). The combination of all these was offensive to those dedicated to a Judea governed according to Torah. The accusation, however, implicitly acknowledged that many Judeans welcomed this “lawless” state of affairs. There had long been a “Hellenist” sentiment in Judea, with even the Hasmonean family following this path. Some priestly families were tainted by certain kinds of “lawlessness,” as archaeological evidence shows that the upper-class family that built a large mansion on the western hill included two-dimensional representations of birds in their decorative plasterwork (Metropolitan Museum of Art 1986, plate 110). By comparison, excavations of Herod’s palaces on Judean soil have provided only slender evidence of this kind of “lawlessness.” So the delegation’s charge may be true but misleading.

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By their revolutionary actions in several parts of the kingdom and by the delegation’s speech before Augustus, Judeans had indicated their contempt for Herod at the time of his death. His children were greedy to get what they could from his death—to seize the chance and look to their own advantage. Augustus and his deputies were unsure how to administer Judea, as they groped for an adequate solution that would safeguard Rome’s interests, without giving much thought to the uniqueness of Judean religion and the challenges it posed.

Herod and the Roman Jewish community

Roman literature reflects aspects of Judaism’s uniqueness and its challenges. The regard in which Augustus held Herod and his feuding family members, and the serious issues that arose at this critical time for the future of Herod’s kingdom, contrast sharply—but not unexpectedly—with later satirical views of Herod, his family, and Judaism more generally. It is easy to parody others’ customs and commitments, but the main point to draw from satires such as Juvenal’s and Persius’s is the level of their familiarity with Judaism and indirectly their sense of its importance in their own day and earlier.

Persius (34–62 CE) provides an important glimpse of Herod’s family’s influence in Rome’s Jewish community. The intention and referents of *Satires* 5.180–8 are debated; his allusion to Herod is also debated, whether he has Herod the Great or Marcus Julius Herod Agrippa II in

mind. But it presupposes public familiarity with Herod and his family among Roman Jews. Rome's Jewish community was familiar with "Herodian festivals attested by Josephus; . . . these passages confirm the importance of the more favourable Jewish attitudes to the house of Herod" (Horbury 2003, 83–122, here 88³). Horbury concludes that the reference to Herod's days "are Herodian birthdays or accession days – most probably those of Agrippa II" (121). Despite the care with which Horbury draws this conclusion, he marshals evidence that might plausibly allude to a festival among Rome's Jews that originated not with Agrippa II but possibly during the time of his great-grandfather, though certainty is not possible.

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But when Herod's birthday arrives, and lamps entwined with violets
are placed on the greasy window-sills spewing out heavy clouds
of smoke, and then the tunny's tail swims around, encircling
the cheap red dish, and the white jar is bloated with wine,
you move your lips in silence and blanch at the circumcised Sabbath.

(Persius, *Satires* 5.180–4)

It would go beyond the evidence to say that Persius alludes to a public celebration of Herod's day (perhaps temple dedication? perhaps accession day? perhaps birthday [cf. Antipas in Matt. 14:6]?). Persius's subject is mainly dining customs; nevertheless, when he links recognition—whether public or private—of Herod or his family two generations or so after Herod's death with circumcision and the Sabbath, both obvious markers of Jewish self-identification, he shows some familiarity with Judaism (Barclay 1996, 399–444). Even if by this day he simply means "the Sabbath," Persius would be implying, no doubt satirically, that Romans connected the "circumcised Sabbath" with recollection of the house of Herod. Juvenal uses a similar collocation of terms to describe Romans who are attracted to Jewish ways:

Some, whose lot it was to have Sabbath-fearing fathers,
Worship nothing but clouds and the *numen* of the heavens,
And think it is a great crime to eat pork, from which their parents
Abstained as human flesh. They got themselves circumcised,
And look down on Roman law, preferring instead to learn

And honour and fear the Jewish commandments, whatever

Was handed down by Moses in that arcane tome of his –

Never to show the way to any but fellow-believers

(If they ask where to get some water, find out if they're foreskinless).

(Juvenal, *Satires* 14.96–104)

A generation later Juvenal (ca. 55–ca. 130 CE), like Persius but without mentioning Herod, shows a somewhat more detailed knowledge of the details. He links observance of the Sabbath and circumcision with abstention of pork and keeping Mosaic Law, attributing these choices to Romans who have become deeply attached to Judaism. Though this is heavy-handed satire, there is truth to the picture. Judaism continued to make inroads in Roman society, attracting a range of adherents—some of whom have undergone circumcision and are “foreskinless”—who follow Mosaic Law, worship practices, and food regulations.

These satirical portraits (including Juvenal's explicit parodying of Agrippa and Berenice in *Satire* 6.156–7) give something of the flavor of Jewish life in Rome, fifty or a hundred years after Herod. They hint at Herod's continuing significance for Rome's Jewish community or, at the very least, that community's knowledge of and interest in details of the family's behavior.

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Notes

- 1 Josephus usually refers to Augustus as Caesar, the more appropriate form for the period before 27 BCE; for clarity's sake, however, we will refer to him as Octavian before that year and Augustus after.
- 2 *War* 2.80; *peri tēs tou ethnous autonomias*, not “racial” (so Williamson) but rather “national autonomy.”
- 3 Horbury observes that Herod's accession day was celebrated as a feast of dedication of the temple, so that the temple's restoration “reinforced the Herodian form of ruler-cult” (2003, 100; on Herod's days, see especially 101–22).

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2 From Idumea to Petra (to 64 BCE)

Introduction

Conflicting origins for Herod were designed by the Roman, Christian, and Jewish communities to meet differing needs. On the Roman side, Strabo (ca. 64 BCE to after 23 CE) describes Herod as a “native of the country” who “slinked into the priesthood” (*Geog.* 16.2.46), an obvious error. From a Christian point of view, Justin (*Dialogue with Trypho* 52) claims Ashkelon is the birthplace of Antipater, Herod’s father, and Eusebius (*Church History*, 1.6) preserves a calumny (citing Julius Africanus, who was born in Jerusalem ca. 160) that Herod’s grandfather Antipas was a Gentile slave who had served in the Temple of Apollo in Ashkelon; a little later (1.7.24) Eusebius says, correctly, “Herod . . . had no drop of Israelitish blood.” Despite the extended analysis of the evidence by Kokkinos, there is still doubt whether “the origins of his dynasty have been rediscovered” (Kokkinos 1998, 100–39, here 139). We simply cannot say where precisely Herod was born or where his family was located, since the later accounts are for the most part tendentious, made from whole cloth. We find the discussion of Ashkelon’s coinage (Kokkinos 1998, 128–36) a case of clutching at straws (Marshak 2015, 231; Rocca 2008, 127; Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 93; Kushnir-Stein 1999, 198).

A Jewish tradition concerning Herod’s origins (*Ant.* 14.403–4) refers to him as a “half-Jew,” presumably from some Jewish source other than Nicolas, available to Josephus. There are three possible explanations of the phrase, none with much historical value, but illuminating for the implications. It is barely possible that the phrase was based on the belief that Herod’s mother was not considered a true convert to Judaism. The later view that Jewishness was reckoned through the mother, however, should not be pressed this far back, since in this period a wife was considered Jewish if she married a Jew. It might be arguable that the phrase implied that Herod was a “Godfearer” (to use a term common in

NT scholarship; Reynolds & Tannenbaum 1987, 43–67) but not a full convert to Judaism through baptism, circumcision, and sacrifices, but the question of Herod's Judaism had to do with his grandfather, not him. The third possible explanation of the phrase “half-Jew” is that a sufficient number of generations had not passed since his forebear's conversion; this was usually three as in Philo (*De virtutibus* 108 and *Spec. leg.* 1.52–3) but four in the Temple Scroll (11 QT). If such a requirement obtained, there might have been debate whether the third generation was to be reckoned inclusively or exclusively, although, generally speaking, in numeric matters such as the calendar, years were reckoned inclusively. In an inclusive reckoning, Herod—the third generation—was fully Jewish; in an exclusive reckoning, only Herod's children were fully Jewish. The debate could have revolved around Herod's children and grandchildren, especially Agrippa I (see *Ant.* 19.332 and note (c) ad loc.). In Herod's day there may have been no fixed rules.

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Another explanation from Herod's own lifetime (told disingenuously by Josephus, *Ant.* 14.9; *War* 1.123) refers to his biographer's view: “Nicolaus of Damascus . . . says that [Herod's] family belonged to the leading Jews from Babylon. But he says this in order to please Antipater's son Herod.” There is little to commend this claim, whose intention was to make Herod and his family before him fully Jewish, but it does reveal how Josephus can be critical of the sources he uses, especially of Nicolas. We will return to such questions from time to time, but here it seems we can trust his rejection of one of the sources on which he was heavily dependent. We should also discount significantly later views.

Despite the limited evidence and given the absence of vigorous controversy on the point, we may say that Herod was generally reckoned fully Jewish during his lifetime. The following sketch is built up in successive layers, beginning with his parents' roots in Idumea and Nabatea, and then the other political, cultural, and religious influences that shaped him.

Idumeans

Herod was an Idumean. Josephus describes Antipater, Herod's father, as “an Idumaeon by race . . . in the front rank of his nation” (*War* 1.123). His family origins lay in the desert in the tribe of Edom, as it was known

in earlier times, a tribe facing endemic conflict with Israel. A parenthetical explanation in Gen. 25:30 describes enmity between Jacob and Esau, the eponymous progenitors of Israel and Edom. The myth of an early brotherly relationship contained an element of reality: their origins were somewhat similar, both were nomadic peoples from the Arabian plateau, both settled in areas adjacent to the Rift Valley during the second millennium BCE. While Israelites were mostly west of the Jordan and Edomites mostly east of the Jordan and south of the Dead Sea (see [Map 2.1](#)), gradually Edomites moved westward, occupying areas in the northern Negev and southern Judea (Kasher 1988). This pattern of settlement, though accelerated by the Babylonian victory over Judah in 587 BCE, shows little evidence of force of arms. The depopulation of Judah during the sixth century occurred at the same time as Idumeans (as they were called in Greek) were pushing westward, so that by the second century BCE Idumeans were settled on the southern border of Israel, occupying an area from south of Bethlehem to near Beersheba, and from the Dead Sea to the coastal plain, though not as far as the coast. The chief city was Marissa (Kloner 1994; Oren & Rappaport 1984, 114–53).

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At the same time as the Idumeans migrated to better land, Nabateans, a group with less clear origins, replaced them in ancient Edom; the paucity of written sources does not allow us to say if they were pushed or moved peacefully, nor can we say precisely when this migration occurred (Bowersock 2003; Parr 2003).



Map 2.1 Map of the Levant, showing the main political areas, cities, and rivers.

Following the Hasmonean dynasty's startlingly successful revolt against Syria (165 BCE and following), relations with their Idumean neighbors to the south were relatively good. Common cause made sense for a period, since both occupied an uncomfortable position between two major powers: Syria under the Seleucids north of Judea, and Egypt under the Ptolemies southwest of Idumea. John Hyrcanus (135–104 BCE), however, disturbed the balance by pushing east into the Transjordan and south into Idumea (*Ant.* 13.257–8). Josephus speaks of his “conquering” the Idumeans and forcing their conversion to Judaism, a widely held view that has been reassessed. Strabo (*Geog.* 16.2.34), in a confusing comment, provides a measure of support for unforced conversion: “The Idumaeans are Nabataeans, but owing to a sedition they were banished from there, joined the Judaeans, and shared in the same customs with them.” Perhaps Herod’s attachment to Judaism resulted from his grandfather’s voluntary adherence and “full” conversion to the temple cult in Jerusalem and not from a forced submission to a bare-bones form of Judaism.

Aryeh Kasher mounted a challenge to the traditional view of forced Idumean conversion (Kasher 1988, 46–78). Idumea was annexed, not conquered, he suggests (comparing *Ant.* 13.257–8; 15.254; Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.34; and Ptolemy), emphasizing that Josephus refers only to the conquest of Marissa and Adora (*War* 1.63), and pointing out that there is no reflection of the problem of forced conversion in the *Mishna*. Both exceptions were heavily Hellenized cities that had ceased to practice traditional circumcision; for the rest of Idumea conversion was peaceful and voluntary, he claims, not under duress. Following John Hyrcanus’s annexation, the rite of circumcision, which Idumeans already practiced, was given Jewish content. Later evidence may confirm this picture. (1) When Pompey imposed his settlement on Judea in 63 BCE he did not detach eastern Idumea from Judea because he considered it fully Jewish. (2) No Idumean delegation begged Pompey for separate status and a revival of the Idumean cult. (3) In Herod’s day there were still unconverted Idumeans practicing the cult of Cos (Kos, Qaus), as one might expect if conversion was voluntary. (4) When Josephus, a century later, wrote about Pompey’s decision, he said that Pompey confined the Jewish nation within its own borders—an impossible turn of phrase had Idumea been contending for a national identity. (5) Josephus also reports that, at the time of the Great Revolt of 66–74 CE, Idumeans were especially prominent on the side of revolutionaries. (6) There are accounts of Idumean disciples in the House of Shammai, who were learned in Torah and punctilious in their observance (*Sifre Zutta*; Kasher 1988, 62–3).

The most important argument in favor of peaceful conversion is that (7) not much later, Alexander Janneus (103–76 BCE) appointed Herod’s grandfather Antipas *stratēgos* (“praetor”) of all Idumea (*Ant.* 14.10)—an unusual degree of trust had Antipas only recently accepted Judaism unwillingly. Kasher points to instances where Idumean nobility was integrated with Jewish national leadership: Hyrcanus II, a Hasmonean, married an Idumean, and Herod, an Idumean, married a Hasmonean. He further observes that even though Antipater, Herod’s father, was vigorously pro-Roman and strongly Hellenized, two of his children (Joseph and Salome) bore Hebrew names, as did Herod’s cousin, Achiab (but see Kokkinos 1998, 91–4).

Kasher adds a social-historical reconstruction to support these views. When Hyrcanus I threatened Idumea, there was a voluntary agreement between him and strongly patriarchal Idumean leadership, perhaps including Antipas, to accept inclusion in Judea, a decision accepted by

the majority. Not all, of course, would have agreed; two generations later some still bore names reflecting cultic attachment to Cos, such as Herod's brother-in-law, Costobar. Because some resisted and others in the two Hellenized cities who had not been circumcised were compelled to be, it came to be viewed as a widely forced conversion with compulsory circumcision. Whether Herod's family came from Marissa or not, the picture so far as Herod was concerned would not be significantly altered. Herod's grandfather Antipas's rapid rise to a position of influence suggests the conversion was more voluntary than forced, though to be sure he might have become prominent in any case since he was wealthy and influential. Some of Herod's wealth two generations later derived from Antipas's sources of income (land, trade, flocks, investments, and tariff concessions; [Chapter 11](#)). Kasher's analysis is on the whole persuasive; it profoundly alters one's general approach to Herod's antecedents.

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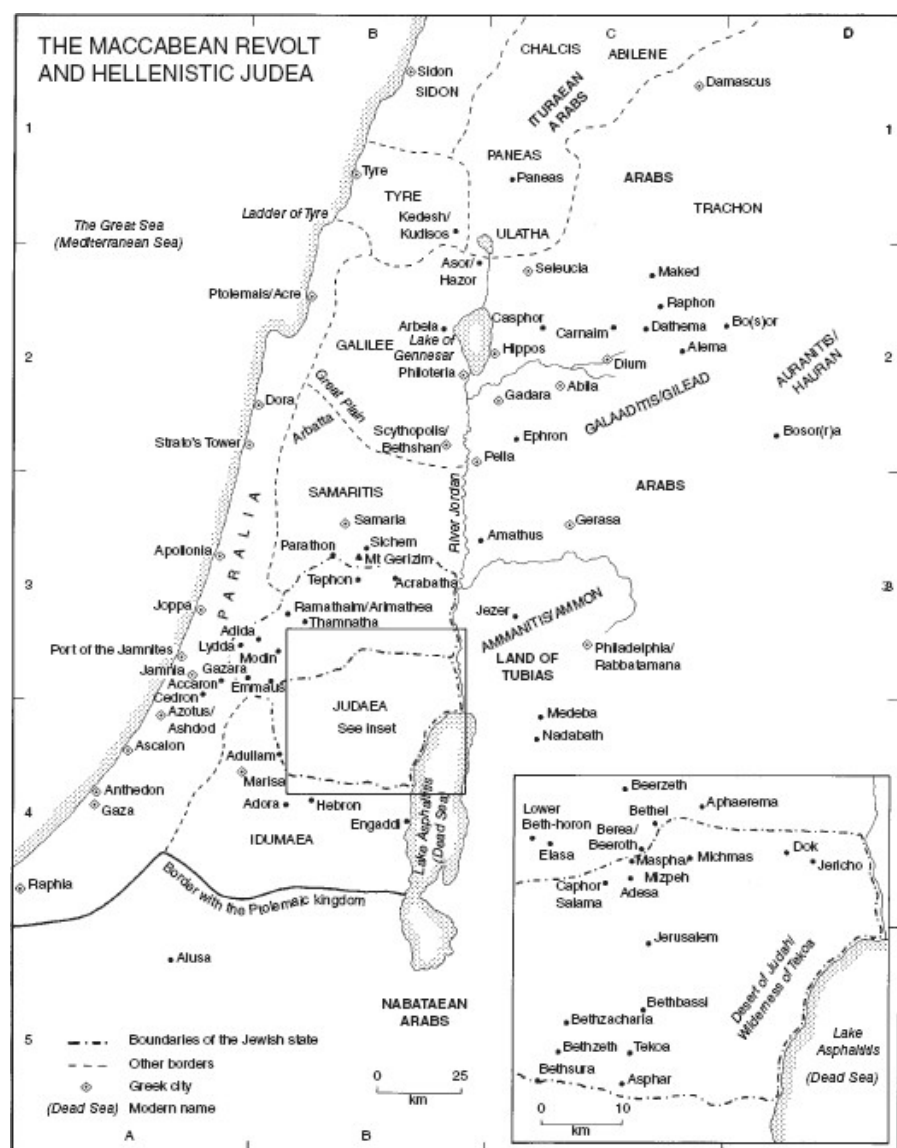
If conversion was “full” and voluntary, Herod grew up in a family with no doubts about Judaism. He was a third-generation descendant of a willing proselyte to Judaism, and was so regarded by his contemporaries (*Ant.* 20.173; *War* 2.266). Later, during the dispute among Caesarea's inhabitants over the status and character of the city, Herod was said to be from *to genos Ioudaiōn*, the Jewish people). Later hesitations concerning Herod's Judaism were not held widely—if at all—during his lifetime.

Idumea was relatively small (see [Map 2.2](#)): on the east the border was the middle half of the Dead Sea shoreline, roughly centered on Masada; on the south it ran roughly east and west through Beersheba; on the west the border paralleled the coastline, between 5 and 15 miles inland; on the north it ran from east to west between Bethlehem and Hebron, with a northerly bump at the western corner (see [Figure 8.6](#)). The area is mostly rolling hill country, rising from the coastal plain that Idumeans did not usually occupy through the Shephelah up to the relatively barren areas beyond the height of land, where the ground drops rapidly away through rugged and arid hills to meet the Dead Sea at nearly 1,300' below sea level. The southern edge is relatively flat; beyond this border lived Nabateans.

All in all the land was productive in a variety of ways; there were good grain, olive, and fruit-growing areas, useful grazing lands for goats, sheep, and camels (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.2: “partly farmers”). Within its borders was the ancient city of Hebron, known for pottery

and glass blowing. Marissa and Adora, on the other hand, were in close touch with cultural currents of the Hellenistic world; Marissa in particular was *à la mode*, laid out on a Hippodamian plan, with a gridiron of streets, two main north–south and one main east–west.

Despite its uncomfortable position on Egypt's northeastern flank, Idumea prospered. Some of the land encouraged settlement; in the eastern and southern portions semi-nomadic grazing was the rule; in the west grain predominated; in the central and northern areas olives and settled pursuits predominated. The location near two natural transportation corridors encouraged contact with neighbors and may also have prompted involvement in the lucrative trade routes running through these corridors: one led through Nabatean and Idumean territory between Petra and Ashkelon, part of an overland trade route from the Arabian plateau; the other was a coastal route from Egypt to the Fertile Crescent, the Via Maris.



Map 2.2 Map of the Maccabean (Hasmonean) Revolt and Hellenistic Judea: the bold line at the map's lower edge marks the line between the Ptolemaic and the Seleucid Kingdoms, a border that earlier was near the top of the map, roughly through Tyre and Paneas. The main north–south transportation routes were along the seacoast and the Jordan River.

Idumeans were a classic example of a semi-nomadic people in the process of moving to a settled existence. By a stroke of good timing, they occupied a suitable piece of land that was largely empty and not much contested. The variety of land-forms was appropriate for mixed

occupation and a mixed economy, itself a kind of transitional region, where several population centers could be developed, some on traditional sites, some on relatively undeveloped land. Josephus says (*War* 4.530), “Hebron is a town of greater antiquity not only than any other in the country, but even than Memphis in Egypt, being reckoned to be two thousand three hundred years old” (Ofer, *NEAEHL* 2.606–9; Eshel/Richardson forthcoming); Marissa, though an old site, had fewer religious attachments and was, therefore, appropriate for a fresh experiment in city building. Transportation routes were adequate, except for a lack of an outlet to the sea.

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Idumeans were in transition culturally. From the time of Alexander the Great, and probably from the Persian period, this borderland region had been subject to Hellenizing influences, a development that overlapped with the movement of Idumeans into the area. The major city of Marissa reached its apex in the Hellenistic period (fourth to second centuries BCE) and was a Seleucid stronghold during the Hasmonean revolt until Hyrcanus took it along with the rest of Idumea (*Ant.* 13.257–8). It was restored to its original inhabitants by Pompey and rebuilt under Gabinius (*War* 1.70; *Ant.* 14.88). During the civil war between Herod and Antigonos, Antigonos’s Parthian allies destroyed Marissa (*War* 1.269; *Ant.* 14.364). Excavations illuminate the Hellenistic period of the city, especially the third century.

The strong sense of cultural differentiation at the beginning of the second century BCE continued, even if in a muted fashion, during the next 200 years, but the main cultural trend was toward a higher degree of integration under both Hasmoneans and Herodians. Idumean settlement in the area south of Judea proper—a process that had been going on for several hundred years—led directly to the complementary processes of assimilation and integration. This policy had different characteristics under the Hasmoneans, Herod, and the procurators, but it was remarkably successful. As Kasher has pointed out, there is evidence both of passive Idumean participation in the political and religious life of Judea and of active involvement as vigorous defenders of Jewish religious autonomy and political freedom in the revolt of 66–74 CE (Kasher 1988, 206–11, 214–39). At its outbreak, for example, the generals who led the Idumeans were prominent Jewish religious leaders: Jeshua son of Sapphas, a chief priest, and Eleazar, son of the high priest Neus (*War* 2.566). Josephus has a scurrilous editorial description: “they were a turbulent and disorderly people, ever on the alert for commotion and delighting in revolutionary changes, and only needed a little flattery

from their suitors to seize their arms and rush into battle as to a feast” (*War* 4.231); a fairer sketch of Idumean character is that they mobilized all their forces “to defend the freedom” of Jerusalem at the climax of the revolt (*War* 4.208, 234).

While waiting to be let into Jerusalem to aid in its defense, Simon of Cathla, an Idumean leader, delivered a speech in which he claimed, according to Josephus, that the city “belongs to us all” (*War* 4.272), it is “the mother city” (274), its gates have been closed against the defenders, “nearest kinsmen” (278), its worship constitutes “national sacred rites” (279)—indeed, the revolt is a defense of “our common country” from both inside and outside foes (281). Once inside the city the Idumeans slaughtered great numbers, including the chief priests and the high priest Ananus (*War* 4.314–18; see also 7.267). But Josephus also says (following a different source?) that Idumeans were full of remorse for the events that followed their liberation of Jerusalem, and they went back home dejectedly after releasing 2,000 prisoners from jail (*War* 4.345–54). Josephus, of course, is not to be trusted to report speeches accurately, but his rhetoric of kinship between Idumeans and Jews seems unrelated to political or editorial rationale. The claim to closeness may make sense historically.

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Josephus mentions a revealing incident at the beginning of Herod’s efforts to consolidate the kingship. After landing at Ptolemais (Acco) in early 39 BCE, the districts of Idumea, Galilee, and Samaritis (*War* 1.302) came over to Herod voluntarily. Later the same year, however, after rescuing family members from Masada, he sent them to Samaritis (*War* 1.303) while he occupied Idumea “to prevent any insurrection in favour of Antigonus.” Surprisingly, Herod, a leading Idumean recently named king, could not count on Idumean support. Many Idumeans supported the Hasmoneans, for there were defections to Antigonus from among Herod’s Idumean supporters (*War* 1.326). One more indication: when Herod died and revolt was raised in Idumea, among other places, 2,000 of Herod’s veterans who were settled on allocations there (presumably to guard the Nabatean frontier) fought troops loyal to Archelaus.¹

Adding these bits of evidence to Kasher’s reassessment of the relationship between Idumeans and Judeans, the argument that Idumeans’ strongest loyalty was to Judea is more than merely defensible. While Idumeans are not pictured as strongly devoted to a set of religious goals, religion was an important part of their attachment to Judea and they seemed to harbor no special ambition for local self-government.

This religious and cultural change began with the “conquest” under Hyrcanus I; its aftermath suggests that it was, as Kasher claims, voluntarily supported by a large number of Idumeans. (1) In 39 BCE when they might collectively have viewed Herod as a dream come true, some Idumeans preferred to attach their fate to the one remaining Hasmonean star, Antigonus. (2) They did not rise in general revolt in 4 BCE on Herod’s death. (3) They sprang vigorously to the standard in 66 CE at the beginning of the Revolt. (4) They sought to defend the city of Jerusalem with all their resources in 69 CE. (5) They withdrew from the city when it was clear that Judaism was in deep trouble a little later. These indications of steady and loyal devotion to Judea and Jerusalem suggest that Josephus’s negative evaluation of Idumeans needs modification. Idumeans became acculturated to Judea and closely identified with its fortunes from the late second century BCE to the late first century CE. The strong Hellenizing tendencies in the cities of Marissa and Adora (exemplified in the new city design of Marissa) were slowed or reversed in this period. Whereas third-century BCE Marissa had been the most important city in Idumea (noted in the Zenon papyri), after its destruction by the Parthians in 40 BCE it was replaced by Eleutheropolis (Beth Guvrin), a city that showed increasing Roman influences.

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There is little evidence of continued strong devotion to Cos in the literature, other than the use of Cos in proper names, and the archaeological record has not provided much direct and datable evidence. Two religious sites in the area bear directly on an understanding of Herod: Mamre (Ramet el-Khalil) and Hebron (el-Khalil), both associated with the patriarchs, especially Abraham (Lichtenberger 2007; Eshel/Richardson forthcoming; Magen 1993). A small altar found at Mamre with the name Cos hints that the site was frequented by Idumeans (Mader 1957). Archaeological and architectural evidence—though there is no supporting literary or epigraphic evidence—suggests that Herod enclosed the traditional site of Mamre, just north of Hebron, with a finely dressed *temenos* wall, enclosing an area of about 150 by 200 feet; a huge oak was recalled traditionally as one of the oaks of Mamre at Abraham’s altar to the Lord (Gen. 13:18, 14:13, 18:1; Magen 1993). Josephus says the oak had been there since creation (*War* 4.533; *Ant.* 1.196), and he associates it with Abraham (*Ant.* 1.186). He does not, however, connect the site with Herod, though the style of the masonry (similar to Hebron and the Jerusalem temple) and the date of building point to Herod as the patron, at some uncertain

date. This important religious site in Idumean territory was destroyed in the Great Revolt, rebuilt in 130 CE by Hadrian as a public market, and following the Bar Kokbah revolt became a slave market for Jewish prisoners (Jerome, *Commentaria in Jeremiam* 31; in *Zechariam* 9:2).

Mamre is closely linked with Hebron, a few miles away; Abraham is said to have bought the caves of Machpelah as a family burial site (Gen. 23:1–20; Num. 13:22), where Sarah (Gen. 23:19), Abraham (25:9), Isaac, Rebekah, Leah (49:31), and Jacob (50:13) were buried. Although Nehemiah associates Hebron with returning exiles (Neh. 11:25–36), it was about this time that Idumeans settled it; Judah the Hasmonean destroyed its fortifications when he attacked Marissa and Azotus (1 Macc. 5:65–8). Hebron was a key site in the south of Judea, an important sacred place and an ancient urban area. Herod's structure over the caves of Machpelah—the sole Herodian building surviving today virtually intact—covered the caves with a pilastered wall enclosing an open space (103 by 203 feet, with walls rising 60 feet above the floor), perhaps used for religious observances in connection with Abraham and the patriarchs (Conder 1881; Vincent et al. 1923; Jacobson 1981; Millar 1985; Ofer 1993; see [Figure 9.3](#)).

Mamre's and Hebron's similar design, wall treatment, and style of masonry link them closely; both included a paved courtyard structure open to the sky, with memorials in the open area. What is more, the overall design, masonry details, and external pilasters are nearly identical to those in the Jerusalem temple; although the size of the individual stones is not as large as those in Jerusalem, they are similar in scale and surface treatment. In short, the Haram el-Khalil and the Ramet el-Khalil were prototypes of the Jerusalem temple, something like large-scale *maquettes*. It is a moot question whether there are analogies to these open-air structures; the Kalybe, for example, an open-air religious structure found in Syria and Jordan, is later and its distinctive features are different from those of the Haram al-Khalil and the Ramet al-Khalil (Segal 2001, 91–118).

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Abraham was a progenitor for both Idumeans and Jews, so building memorials to Abraham at Hebron and Mamre allowed Herod to emphasize the unity of Idumeans and Jews; the buildings were acts of piety to please both and offend neither.² They indicated Herod's true colors in religion and piety, for he had little reason to give a false impression in this region; we may say that his convictions rested on the origins of the religious experiences of Jews and Idumeans, an inheritance

from his grandfather who transitioned from one to the other. There was no fundamental opposition between his Idumean ethnicity and his Jewish religion. Herod inherited a generous measure of interest in the Hellenistic world from his grandfather and father, including a fondness for things Roman, an acute sense of political opportunity, and an autocratic style. He also inherited a sense of rootedness in Idumea and a real but not overly sophisticated attachment to Judaism ([Chapter 12](#)).

Nabateans

Nabateans have captured more scholarly and public imagination than Idumeans, spurred by the romantic impressions of Petra and its modern discoverer, Jakob Burckhardt. Knowledge of Nabatean culture has been much amplified through several other sites that show their rich artistic traditions, especially in sculpture and low relief (Millar 1993, [chapter 11](#); Markoe 2003, 1–111).

Though the evidence is slender, Herod's mother Cypros was either a Nabatean or—less likely—from some unnamed Arab tribe contiguous to Nabatea. Josephus says (*War* 1.181),

Antipater had married a lady named Cypros, of an illustrious Arabian family, by whom he had four sons—Phasaël, Herod afterwards king, Joseph and Pheroras—and a daughter, Salome ... through this matrimonial alliance, he had won the friendship of the king of the Arabians, and it was to him that he entrusted his children when embarking on war with Aristobulus.

Less clear, textually uncertain, and garbled is *Ant.* 14.121, which confirms that Cypros was from a distinguished Arab family but says that Antipater found her among Idumeans. It is unclear if he means she was an Arab living among Idumeans or herself an Idumean. We understand the former. In 14.122 the account again is unclear: Antipater courted “other princes, especially . . . the king of the Arabs”; his friendship with “the king” implies a Nabatean king, since there is no other “king of the Arabians.”

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If “Arabians” and “Nabateans” in *War* and *Antiquities* are one and the same (and usually Josephus means Nabatea when he says Arabia), Cypros must have been connected with the Nabatean royal family, since her children were later sent for safekeeping to that king (Schürer 1973–87, Appendix II, 1.574–86). So Herod's family, during its formative years, enjoyed the patronage of King Aretas III (85–62 BCE; Sullivan

1990, 215) or Obodas II (62–57 BCE), and may have spent time in Petra under Malichus I (57–ca. 28 BCE).

Nabateans settled in ancient Edom and then, as Idumeans, moved to the south of Judea. By the third or second century BCE, they occupied an area east of the Dead Sea and Rift Valley, southward past the head of the Gulf of Aqaba, and also an area west of the Rift Valley between Idumeans to the north, the Sinai peninsula to the south and Egyptians to the west ([Maps 2.1](#) and [2.2](#)). Their northern extent varied a good deal; occasionally they may have reached as far as Damascus (perhaps during the late 30s CE; Millar 1993, 56–7), but during the Herodian period they reached only to Auranitis.

Nabateans lived partly as semi-nomads and partly in urban centers: Petra above all, but also such sites as et-Tannur, Bostra, Canatha (Qanawat), Dionysias (Suweida), Mampsis (Kurnub), Avdat (Obodas), and Nissana. Much of the early information about them derives from Diodorus Siculus, a slightly older contemporary of Herod's who was working with earlier sources, so most of his information is second hand. By mid-first century BCE Nabateans were becoming increasingly sedentary; having seen the advantages of cooperation, they promoted incorporation of non-Arab peoples. They adopted Hellenistic customs, establishing a Hellenistic style of kingship with Nabateans occupying key positions and incorporating Hellenistic conventions into religion and architecture.

Some parts of Nabatean territory were fertile, particularly in Auranitis where there is a good grade of wheat. Other parts to the east and south were relatively infertile, though capable of supporting flocks and herds and limited agriculture. West of the Rift Valley the topography varies from slightly rolling hills in the Negev to more inhospitable areas in the Sinai peninsula proper. Nabatean technology enabled them to find or collect water in arid areas by building aqueducts, using plastered cisterns, and enhancing their water supply by using parallel walls to lead rainfall from uncultivated to cultivated areas. Like Idumeans, Nabateans were shifting from a nomadic life to a settled, agricultural lifestyle.

The Nabatean economy, however, depended less on agriculture than on international trade. Its origins went back to a nomadic period when they were traders between East and West, especially in the flourishing spice trade, but also in incense, silks, and cottons. They continued to control this trade that traveled the Wadi Sirhan through Damascus, southern overland routes through the Hejaz to Petra, or by sea to the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. Most of this trade passed through Nabatean lands on its way to the Mediterranean coast at Gaza or Ashkelon,

though there was an alternate route by sea to Egypt, overland to the Nile, and down the Nile. Petra was an important *entrepôt* at the intersection of two main routes, the Hejaz trade route paralleling the Red Sea and the King's Highway from Aqaba to Damascus and beyond (van Beek 1960; Graf & Sidebotham 2003, 63–73).

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Nabateans were successful merchants and manufacturers. In addition to eastern trade, their proximity to Jericho meant access to the balsam trade and the Dead Sea, Lake Asphaltitis to Romans (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca* 19.94.4–5), which permitted trade in bitumen as well. As skilled potters they used advanced technology for glazing and firing fine pottery that was an international commodity (Schmitt-Korte 1976, 74–81; 1997, 205–27). Individual wealth and civic wealth—especially Petra's—were founded on trade; they were ahead of their time, supplying packaged end products (Hammond 1973, 69). Nabatean use of Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the east, facilitated trade; they adopted Aramaic as both a written and spoken language, despite their Arabic origins (Millar 1993, 302–8; Macdonald 2003, 36–56).

A pantheon of gods centered on Dusares (*Du* = “he of,” *Shara* = a region, probably in Edom), identified with Zeus/Jupiter. Dusares dominates the sources of the first century BCE to the first century CE, but may have been preceded by the North Arabian god Illah (compare *el*, *elohim* in Hebrew). The pantheon's major goddess was Allat, identified with Athena, Aphrodite, and Venus, and also with Ishtar/Astarte and Attargatis. Male gods included al-Kutba and Shailaqaum; female gods included Manawatu and al-Uzza. The cult seemingly assimilated other deities without strain; thus Ba'al Shamim from Phoenicia and Palmyra, Cos from Idumea, and Isis from Egypt also found homes in Nabatea (Negev 1987, 287–90).

The most important known Nabatean cult centers—Petra, Dhiban, Obodas (Avdat), et-Tannur, and Si'a—share similar overall architectural features: a high and severely rectangular temple with an altar in front for sacrifice, a *temenos* reminiscent of but alien to both Hellenistic and Roman practice, as well as a strong cubical sense of space with sophisticated surface decoration. Negev and others identify two forms of temples: a three-part form (porch, holy place, holy of holies, itself often tripartite) and a square building within a larger walled *temenos* (Negev 1986, [chapter 2](#), 1987, 288; Villeneuve & Al-Muheisen 2003, 82–100). The architecture of Nabatea, like its religion and culture and agriculture, was uniquely responsive to geographical, climatic, and ethnological

influences (Hammond 1973, 60–74; de Vogüé 1865–77; Butler 1907).

Nevertheless, Nabatean towns, religious complexes, and building types were varied. Petra is much the best known and most remarkable, but no other Nabatean city uses rock-cut buildings as extensively as Petra. Stunning rock-cut tombs (for example, the Khasneh, the Tomb of the Roman Soldier, the Urn Tomb, and Ad Deir) show Petra at its most impressive, but the Qasr Bint, the Temple of the Winged Lion, and the Great Temple demonstrate more traditional masonry techniques. Compare these with the very different complexes at Obodas (Avdat), the residential complexes at Mampsis (Kurnub), and the religious site of et-Tannur; no simple description covers this vigorous culture's variety at the height of its powers in the first century BCE through the first century CE.

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One Nabatean site is particularly important in a study of Herod; his name occurs on a statue base, found immediately to the right of the main entrance in the Temple of Ba'al Shamim at Si'a, a three-temple complex at the end of a sacred way from Canatha (Qanawat). The Temple of Ba'al Shamim, which predominated over an adjacent Temple to Dusares, was built ca. 33 BCE and the years following, though the extent of Herod's involvement is uncertain (see [Chapter 10](#)). Obaisath funded a statue in Herod's honor—"To King Herod, master"—though regrettably he did not say why. We know from this that Herod accepted representations of himself (there were several in Athens, as well), so apparently he was not averse to images of himself away from his Jewish subjects ([Chapter 10](#)). Its placement on the porch implies Herod's connection with the building, possibly direct participation as donor (there were several other statues alongside his) or as builder. The Nabatean style of the building is different from Herod's usual style, as is the detail. So while we cannot be certain he had a primary role, the inscriptional evidence and the presence of his statue suggest he was a patron of a Nabatean temple, perhaps through a financial contribution (Millar 1993, 395–6). The complex included a *theatron* (a porticoed forecourt with seating for cultic ceremonies), ritual baths at the entrance, an office for the keeper of the site, and places of sacrifice. At Si'a, Nabatean religious architecture dramatically exploited a site above a perpetual river, juxtaposing multiple temples in a single complex (see [Figure 9.7](#)).

This was a dangerous period for Herod, when the struggle between Antony and Octavian was coming to a head and Herod was preparing

to join forces with Antony; he was also having difficulty with Cleopatra VII, Antony's lover (*War* 1.364–5), and his relations with Nabatea were strained in 32–31 BCE as a result of Cleopatra's machinations. Herod owed tribute that he and the king of Nabatea together had to pay to Cleopatra, but when Malichus refused to pay his share, Herod was responsible for the whole amount ([Chapter 4](#)). The temple at Si'a was under construction at the time of his attack on Canatha, though perhaps his role in the temple came later. In any case, Herod raided Nabatea, attacking first Dion (though Josephus says Diospolis) and then Canatha (Qanawat) where, after initial success, he fell into a trap laid by one of Cleopatra's generals. The result was a discouraging defeat for Herod (*War* 1.366–8), though he later gained such a crushing victory near Philadelphia (Amman) that he was named “protector” (*prostatēs*) of the Arab nation (*War* 1.380–5; *Ant.* 15.108–60; [Chapter 7](#)).

These events, military and political on the one hand, religious and architectural on the other, can be fitted together. After his victory at Philadelphia, Herod was dominant in northern Nabatea for a time, perhaps until Augustus ceded him Auranitis in 23 BCE. His participation in Si'a's Temple of Ba'al Shamim may have been meant to celebrate his victory at the one place where he had suffered a demoralizing defeat, near Canatha. In 10/9 BCE, when a somewhat similar problem arose triggered by a similar default in payment by Obodas III (30–9 bce), there was a revolt in Trachonitis. Taking a different tack, Herod settled 3,000 Idumeans in Trachonitis to assist in keeping the peace (*Ant.* 16.285; see all of 16.271–99; [Chapter 6](#)).

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Two conclusions follow. (1) Herod seized an opportunity to assist in building in his mother's Nabatea just as he had in his father's Idumea, parallel and complementary acts of piety (*War* 1.400, 462; Richardson 2004, [chapter 13](#)). (2) While the two memorials to Abraham in Idumea were at least indirectly if not directly to the God of Israel, the temple at Si'a was to a god usually associated with Phoenicia or North Arabian groups, though Ba'al Shamim (“Lord of the Heavens”) was not totally alien to Israel's ancient worship. Nabateans would have welcomed the building at Si'a, just as Idumea would have welcomed his structures at Hebron and Mamre.

Itureans

In Jewish tradition Itureans were connected with Ishmael (Gen. 25:12–

15; 1 Chron. 1:2831), Arabs whose eponymous ancestor was Jetur (Schürer 1973–87, 561–73; Myers 2010, 2–11). Like Nabateans and Idumeans, Itureans were open to strong Hellenistic and Roman influences; more importantly, they had adopted Judaism, though to what extent they had been deeply integrated into Jewish religion and society by Herod's day is debated (Shahîd 1984, 5, 13–14; Aviam 2011).

Evidence for Itureans has been accumulating for several decades: literary texts offering historical insights have been amplified and modified by archaeological data, coins, and inscriptions (Myers 2010, *passim*). The inscriptions are mainly funerary and military, important for underscoring Itureans' roles as Roman auxiliaries in places such as Germania, Mauretania, Pannonia, Bulgaria, and Egypt. They add relatively little, however, to an understanding of the homeland. Iturean bronze coinage, in Greek and showing Hellenistic influences, emphasized the rulers' self-identification as chief priests and tetrarchs, implying limited political power in a Roman world. Following successful investigations of some Iturean archaeological sites, especially by Moshe Hartal and Shimon Dar, within only a portion of Iturean territory, further access to a wider range of sites has become restricted by political upheavals. The debate continues on whether a form of pottery found at some sites is diagnostic of a distinct Iturean culture.

Iturea was a fluctuating area in southern Syria centered on the southern end of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains (Map 2.1). At its greatest extent, it included the headwaters of the Jordan River and the area around Lake Huleh, north past Mount Hermon, parts of both Lebanon ranges, part of the Beka'a valley, and east through parts of Gaulanitis (the Golan), Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.10, 18, 20). The territory shrank or expanded according to political fortunes, but probably never included Damascus (Sullivan 1990, 71). It was a geographically mixed region, mainly mountainous but with some fertile areas; according to Strabo, Itureans preferred the mountains (because they were "robbers"). Some of the land was thickly forested with the famous cedars of Lebanon and full of wildlife; other parts offered well-watered land for farms, vineyards and orchards. Iturea included the headwaters of three major rivers—the Jordan, fed mainly by melt water from Mount Hermon's snowcap, flowing south; the Litani, rising near Heliopolis, flowing south and then west to the Mediterranean at Tyre (Sur); and the Orontes, rising near Heliopolis, flowing north through Emesa (Homs) and Apamea (Qal'at al Madiq) before turning west through Antioch (Antakya) to the Mediterranean at Seleucia. Iturea's main cities were Chalcis (Anjar?), Abila (Suq) for some of the time, and Heliopolis (Baalbek).

After Alexander's empire was divided, this area was a political borderland between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms, but in 200 BCE the Seleucids under Antiochus III defeated the Egyptians under Ptolemy IV at Panias (Banias), near the southern edge of Iturean territory. For more than a century, Judea had been under Ptolemaic rule; the Battle of Panias changed everything. Facing aggressive and now dominant Hellenism under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Judean revolt sprang up led by the Maccabeans (Hasmoneans; [Chapter 4](#)); as the revolt gained assurance and as Syria weakened, the effects of Hellenism were swept back on a number of fronts.

Judean control over Itureans began under Judah Aristobulus I (104–103 BCE), or perhaps a bit earlier if his reign was too brief to allow such a vigorous campaign. Josephus says Aristobulus converted the Itureans to Judaism:

he made war on the Ituraeans and acquired a good part of their territory for Judea and compelled the inhabitants, if they wished to remain in their country, to be circumcised and to live in accordance with the laws of the Jews.

(*Ant.* 13.318)

He goes on to say, quoting Strabo (following Timagenes), “he acquired additional territory for them, and brought over to them a portion of the Ituraean nation, whom he joined to them by the bond of circumcision” (*Ant.* 13.319). His account is colored by the view that the Hasmoneans extended Judaism by force and thus imposed their beliefs on others (Kasher 1988, 70–80); as with Idumeans, we may doubt Josephus's view of Itureans' acceptance of Judaism, though confirming evidence is lacking. We must be content to note the parallels between Idumeans and Itureans, placing a question mark behind statements about forced conversion, but we may note parenthetically that Chalcis, a petty kingdom in the southern Beka'a valley—sometimes part of Iturea—had occasional Jewish rulers, such as Herod, a grandson of our Herod (ruled Chalcis 41–8 CE), and Agrippa II (Millar 1993, 238).

Pompey, however, reversed the Hasmonean incorporation of areas north and east of Galilee into the Judean kingdom. In 63 BCE he handed Panias, Gaulanitis, and Lake Huleh back to Iturea—consistent with his aim to limit Judea's area—thus hampering Judea's economic prospects

and weakening its political will.

Herod first came into public view as ruler of Galilee, appointed in 47 BCE by his father Antipater (*War* 1.203; [Chapter 3](#)), whom Julius Caesar appointed procurator of Judea when he confirmed Hyrcanus II as ethnarch (*War* 1.199–200; *Ant.* 14.143). A year later Sextus Caesar, legate of Syria, appointed Herod governor of some portion of Coele-Syria (*War* 1.213; *Ant.* 14.180), although we cannot say precisely what portion he means (perhaps the area between the two mountain ranges or areas in Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, and Auranitis). Nor is it clear what the appointment meant, since these regions were not in Antipater's territory but under the governor of Syria. The related question—who controlled Iturea during the Herodian period—is also anything but clear (Sullivan 1990, 408–9; Schürer 1973–87, 1.561–73). Herod may have ruled areas occupied by Itureans, though this is not mentioned; Cassius, now dominant in the East following Caesar's assassination, enlarged Herod's appointment in 42 BCE ([Chapter 3](#)). Josephus's use of the phrase “the whole of Syria” (*War* 1.225) in this account is puzzling, though *Ant.* 14.280 has “governor of Coele Syria,” implying a portion of Syria (Millar 1993, 121–3, and n.42; Bickerman 1947, 256). Strabo discusses Coele-Syria proper in *Geog.* 16.2.16–22 where he refers to the area between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon Mountains and then says (16.2.21) the whole area between Seleucia (i.e. Syria) and Egypt-Arabia is called Coele-Syria, remarking that “the country marked off by the Libanus and the Antilibanus is called by that name in a special sense” (see also 16.2.22). We should conclude that at this stage Herod played a role as strong man over Iturea from his base in Galilee. With this we may compare Herod's later designation as “governor of Syria,” along with responsibility for subduing brigands in Trachonitis, often occupied by the Itureans.

When the Roman Senate named Herod king of Judea (40 BCE) his territory must have included Iturea, for in 37 BCE Antony forced Herod to cede Iturea—along with Samaritis and parts of Nabatea and the coast—to Cleopatra. It appears likely that Herod had jurisdiction over Iturea between 47 and 37. The vagueness of the historical records prevents too much speculation, but one deduction is in order: Herod's responsibilities, subordinate to the Syrian governor, included keeping the peace in southern Syria. The Roman troops were for the most part deployed in northern Syria, while the governor was stationed in Antioch (Isaac 1990, 60–7; Millar 1993, [chapters 2, 7, 8](#)). For a decade, beginning in 47 until Iturea was stripped from him, Herod was occupied with putting down brigandage, though not altogether successfully since he had to turn to this task again in 23 BCE ([Chapter 5](#)). His influence over Iturea and south Syrian affairs was more than merely nominal, and

Brigandage was a continuing problem in the area (Richardson 2004, [chapter 2](#)). Like Nabateans and Idumeans, Itureans may have been semi-nomads in Arabia's desert areas, who had formed small and perhaps impermanent settlements in today's northern Galilee, Golan, southern Lebanon, and southern Syria. There is a tendency among modern scholars to exaggerate brigandage—and also by Strabo—as if all Itureans were always brigands (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.18). It is better to say in some regions of Iturea there were some brigands (Myers 2010, 20–1). Herod's brigands, it seems certain, still occupied caves in the region; Hezekiah, for example, was apparently a Jewish bandit-chief between Galilee and Syria, perhaps in Iturean territory ([Chapter 3](#)).

Zenodorus, against whom some of Herod's later actions were aimed, was the hereditary tetrarch and high priest of Iturea, who controlled districts east of the Jordan as far as Auranitis and Trachonitis (Myers 2010, [chapters 4, 5](#); Schürer 1973–87, 1.561–73). He had leased the territory of Lysanias (*War* 1.398), presumably Abila, up the Barada River from Damascus, and perhaps Chalcis in the Beka'a valley (Sullivan 1990, 207–8). Whether in reality or merely public perception, Zenodorus encouraged brigands and robbers living in parts of Trachonitis to prey on traders, using caves in the volcanic outflow north of the Jebel Druze (*War* 1.398–400; *Ant.* 15.342–60; Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.18–20). Damascus complained to the governor of Syria some time in 24/23 BCE, so Varro asked Augustus's advice. On getting Augustus's go-ahead, Varro deprived Zenodorus of Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis. *War* ascribes the military action that followed to Varro but *Antiquities* ambiguously points to Herod as the one who cleared the area. Augustus formally added these areas to Herod's territory (*War* 1.398), wanting a firm hand to keep the region pacified and prevent disturbances in Syria. The account in *Antiquities* 15.349–64 is more complex, however, for Zenodorus charged Herod before Augustus—unsuccessfully—and later prompted Nabateans to revolt against Herod.

Josephus connects this account (through a short panegyric on the close relations between Augustus, Agrippa, and Herod; *War* 1.399–400; *Ant.* 15.354–61) with a description of Herod's building activity at Panias (Banias), the location of a Pan-cult. Panias was on the lower slopes of Mount Hermon, where a major underground headwater of the Jordan rises, near natural caves. The combination of spring and caves with their entrances to the underworld was a natural location for the

Pan-cult. Inscriptions attest its vigor. Sometime in 20/19 BCE Herod constructed a Temple to Augustus and Roma in the neighborhood and also a palace ([Chapter 9](#)). By choosing a location within Zenodorus's territory and outside Jewish territory, Herod was minimizing reactions to an Imperial cult center. He adopted somewhat the same strategy as in his buildings at Hebron and at Si'a, valuing local religious traditions and underscoring their inclusion within his reign's religious framework.

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In the next generation Herod Philip renamed Panias Caesarea Philippi (the addition of his own name distinguished it from his father's port city); two generations later, Agrippa II renamed Panias Neronias, honoring his patron Nero (see [Chapters 9](#) and [13](#)). After Nero's death the name reverted back to Caesarea, or Little Caesarea as the Rabbinic literature says (*Qisariyon*; *t.Sukkah* 1:9).

Itureans, though minor players in Herod's drama, occasionally influenced events significantly. Yet Iturea was not named in Herod's final will, though it appears in the NT as part of Philip's territory (Luke 3:1). According to Josephus, Philip received Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, and some parts of Zenodorus's domain around Panias (*War* 2.95; *Ant.* 17.319), territory originally Nabatean and Iturean, though now Judaized—to what extent it is not possible to say.

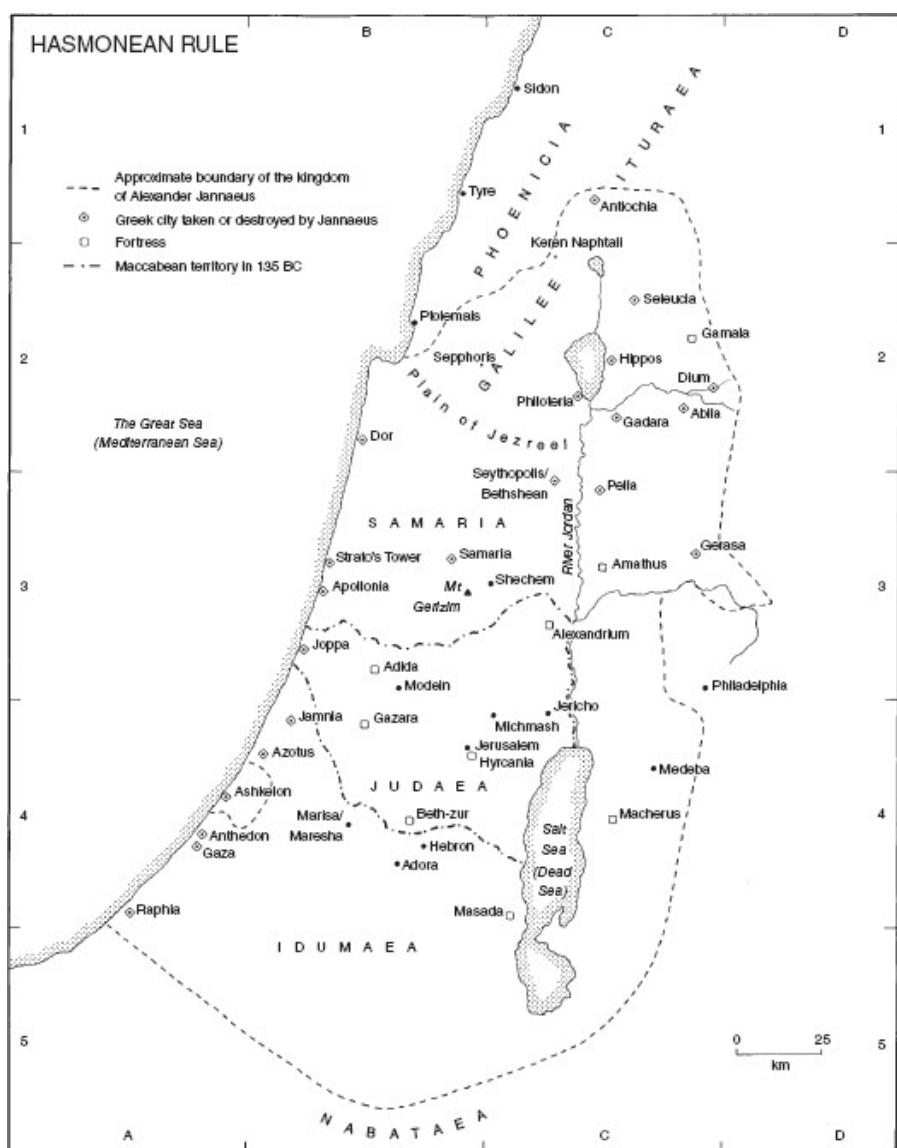
Hasmoneans

The Hasmonean (or Maccabean) dynasty created the conditions with which those who followed in the late first century BCE had to cope. Though Pompey rolled back the results of the expansionist aims of John Hyrcanus I and Alexander Janneus, Herod undoubtedly viewed these natural and ancient frontiers as borders that should be regained. Of the territory lost in Pompey's reorganization, the most crucial was Judea's outlet to the sea (see [Map 2.3](#)).

The Maccabean uprising was an important point in the changing balance between the Seleucids, the Ptolemies, and Rome; it was a harbinger of the future. Under Antiochus III Syria replaced Egypt's Ptolemaic kingdom in the affairs of Judea (200 BCE), expanded into Asia Minor, and extended Syria's traditional hegemony over eastern areas, including Babylonia. Syria was overextended, however, and Antiochus III's defeat at Magnesia (190 BCE) was devastating for Syria's future. Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Antiochus III's son, pursued a program

fundamentally different from his father's, attempting to draw together his diverse kingdom through a unity focused on Olympian Zeus, a program highlighted by beginning a massive Temple to Zeus Olympios in Athens. His attempt to subvert the practices of Judaism—reversing his father's tolerance—was one element in a grand design aimed at an eventual confrontation with Rome.

To survive at all, Judaism had to resist; revolt was inevitable. Syria was too preoccupied to resist a revolt effectively and Egypt was too weak to take advantage of it. A treaty between the Hasmoneans and Rome added the threat of her presence into the equation (*Ant.* 12.414–19; 1 Macc. 8:1–32; Schürer 1973–87, 1.171–3, esp. n.33). In a mere twenty-five years (167–142 BCE) Judea achieved political and religious autonomy, but it was a small, almost landlocked state in remote hill country; when the Hasmonean Simon took Joppa (Yafo), he acquired an outlet to the sea for Israel (Schürer 1973–87, 2.110–14). The next two generations of Jewish leaders, John Hyrcanus I (135–104 BCE) and his two sons, Judah Aristobulus I (104–103) and Alexander Janneus (103–76), expanded Judea dramatically and made it a substantial power. Hyrcanus I took Madaba and Esbus (Heshbon) across the Jordan (128 BCE), then overran Idumea (125 BCE). Hyrcanus I also won coastal cities—Azotus, Jamnia, and Apollonia—at various times. Finally, he marched north through Samaritis, the Carmel range and Scythopolis (Bet Shean), and may have occupied some of lower Galilee, as Klausner argues (1972, 219). With the way to Galilee open, Aristobulus I annexed it (103 BCE), tying Jews who lived there more closely to Judea and preventing Itureans from moving farther south.



Map 2.3 Hasmonean rule: following the successful revolt against the Seleucid Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the fledgling Jewish state gradually expanded at the expense of its neighbors to include Idumea, and Iturea, as well as many coastal and Decapolis cities.

Alexander Jannaeus extended Judea to the Mediterranean coast, enhancing its economy by taking Mount Carmel, Dor, Straton's Tower

(later Caesarea Maritima), Gaza, Raphia, and Anthedon. Later he went east of the Rift Valley, taking Hippos (Susita), Gadara (Umm Qeis), Abila (Qailibah), Dium, Pella (Fahil), Ammathus (Tell 'Ammata), Gerasa (Jerash), and Gedor ('Ain Jedur). Only Philadelphia (Amman) remained independent. Because he was fighting on several fronts, Janneus suffered a serious reverse at the hands of Obodas I near Gadara, in addition to facing internal dissension in a prolonged civil war.

Hasmonean expansion brought the country almost to its old Israelite borders. Military success did not bring internal political peace, however. Quite the opposite: expansion exacerbated latent internal tensions. Probably during this period led by Hyrcanus I, Aristobulus I, and Janneus, religious divisions emerged that were such a factor in the first century CE. Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes (and perhaps what later became Zealots) had their roots in the late second and early first centuries BCE. Each group had its own vision of Judaism, a different program for Judea's future, and little tolerance of rival views ([Chapter 11](#)). Hasmonean military and political power brought competing views to light, each group wanting to refine or modify Israel's religion and culture.

Two internal problems, both at root religious, troubled the nation during these three reigns: first, the conjunction of priestly and royal power in one person; and second, the increasingly competitive views of Sadducees and Pharisees. Hyrcanus I held the high priesthood, though he may have claimed an undefined political role as well: his coins carried the legend "John the High Priest and the congregation (*hever*) of the Jews." The implication of this last phrase is unclear. He shifted his religious ground over time, so it was said, "he became a Sadducee," but something in this shift caused him concern.

At his death he left instructions that his widow should assume royal power and his oldest son Judah Aristobulus I should become high priest. According to Josephus (*Ant.* 13.301–2), Aristobulus starved his mother to death and then assumed the title of king as well (cf. Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.40), thus becoming the first Jewish king to unite political and religious power. After Aristobulus's brief reign, Alexander Janneus inherited his brother's titles, as well as his brother's widow, Salome Alexandra (Atkinson 2012; Case 1997). Janneus's coins—bilingual, referring explicitly to Janneus's kingship, and using symbols such as the cornucopia and anchor—reflect the Hellenistic ideas that were entering Judean life. Like his brother and father, he was Sadducean in his outlook, advancing Sadducees' role and status in Judea and punishing harshly the Pharisaic leader of the civil war that raged for six years. Klausner argues from numismatic evidence (Klausner 1972, 6.234–435;

Meshorer 1967, 56–9) that Alexander Janneus made peace with the Pharisees late in his reign; this is uncertain, though clearly he effected a fundamental shift in religion and governance.

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Religious and political lines became increasingly sharply drawn. Descendants of the Hasmonean leaders who had established Judea's religious autonomy and political independence had now joined religion and politics together to create a unique position of national leadership. Alternative forms of leadership, whether political or religious or social, were subordinated; Sadducees, the group most agreeable to these developments, was dominant, while Pharisees were relatively weak. At the same time, more importantly, the Hasmoneans mimicked features of the neighboring Hellenistic kingdoms. Contact (with Syria in particular) encouraged notions of autocracy and absolutism in later Hasmoneans, especially in such matters as levying of taxes, running the country by a bureaucracy, land distribution, royal prerogatives, a hierarchy of royal "friends," and the like (Klausner 1972, 6.280–97). The trouble was, Judea was not a Hellenistic monarchy.

Things were not peaceful either internally or externally (*War* 1.88, 91–8; *Ant.* 13.372–83). Following the reigns of Alexander Janneus and his widow, Alexandra Salome (76–67 BCE), civil war broke out between her two sons, John Hyrcanus II and Judah Aristobulus II. The troubles to come were announced already at Alexandra's accession (*War* 1.109), when she became queen for the third time, first as wife of Judah Aristobulus I, then wife of Alexander Janneus, then queen in her own right. She appointed her elder son Hyrcanus—who preferred a quiet life (*Ant.* 13.407)—to the high priesthood while she kept her younger son Aristobulus II—who was a man of action—out of public view, following her husband's death-bed advice: Janneus had instructed his wife to assume royal power, and to resolve the long-standing dispute between Sadducees and Pharisees by handing power to the latter. The balance shifted somewhat, though whether because of Janneus's advice or because she shared Pharisees' piety is difficult to say (*War* 1.108–14; *Ant.* 13.408–15). Rabbinic literature's exaggerated view of Alexandra's reign as a golden period (*Lev.R.* 35.10; *b. Ta'anith* 23a; *Sifra* 110b) may be a result of her attitude toward the Pharisees.

Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II

When Alexandra fell ill toward the end of her reign, Aristobulus II

seized the opportunity to improve his position over his older brother Hyrcanus II. Aristobulus assumed control of some fortresses that may already have been in the hands of “friends” of his father’s (*War* 1.117; *Ant.* 13.422). According to *War* he declared himself king; in *Antiquities* he only attempted to seize power (*Ant.* 13.426), fearing that the Pharisees would take complete control (*Ant.* 13.423). His worry was justifiable, for he was convinced that Hyrcanus II was ineffectual and feared that Alexandra was on Hyrcanus II’s side. He took preemptive action, supported by Sadducees and an Iturean army from Lebanon and Trachonitis (*War* 1.117 says, “a mercenary army”; see *Ant.* 13.427), to establish an unshakeable position before his mother’s death, needing to act this way because the Pharisees would support his brother after Alexandra’s death (*War* 1.118–19; *Ant.* 13.423–9).

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Josephus evaluates Alexandra’s role differently in his two accounts. On the one hand (according to *Antiquities*) Alexandra caused the problems, partly because a woman should not have ruled and partly because she exercised absolute rule:

none of the weakness of her sex ... inordinately desirous of the power to rule ... valued the present more than the future ... everything else subordinate to absolute rule ... no consideration for decency or justice ... desire for things unbecoming to a woman ... left the kingdom without anyone who had their interests at heart ... even after her death she caused the palace to be filled with misfortunes and disturbances ... nevertheless she had kept the nation at peace.

(*Ant.* 13.430–2)

On the other hand (according to *War*) she was pious, had the peoples’ respect, and was skilled administratively:

utter lack of brutality ... won the affections of the populace ... firmly held the reins of government, thanks to her reputation for piety ... strictest observer of the national traditions ... intensely religious ... she listened to [the Pharisees] with too great deference ... they took advantage of an ingenuous woman ... a wonderful administrator in larger affairs ... strengthened her own nation ... if she ruled the nation, the Pharisees ruled her.

(*War* 1.107–12)

Two things are clear: Alexandra preferred the Pharisees and gave them some power; she did not, however, settle the succession unequivocally. When she died, civil war broke out openly, pitting Aristobulus II, an aggressive and charismatic pretender, against Hyrcanus II, heir to royal power and ruling high priest. Perhaps it was already raging, for

Hyrcanus had been entrusted with power during the latter part of Alexandra's reign (*War* 1.120; *Ant.* 14.4, ca. 69 BCE), although Aristobulus had already seized several major fortresses. Hyrcanus had moral authority and support of the Pharisees, Aristobulus had armed forces, fortresses, and support of the Sadducees.

Not surprisingly, Aristobulus won as Hyrcanus abdicated and fled. Aristobulus became king; they even exchanged residences (*War* 1.120). The account in *Antiquities* necessitates a revision of the usual dates for this period. In *Ant.* (14.4) a date is given for Hyrcanus's assumption of royal power corresponding to 70/69 BCE, two or three years before Alexandra's death (Schürer 1973–87, 1.200–1, esp. n.1), a date that dovetails with allowance for her illness (and thus for the need for a regent) and also with Aristobulus's revolt. Marcus's note (e) at *Ant.* 14.4 is incorrect about 20.243, however, which states that Aristobulus ruled for two (not three) years and six months; Feldman's note (d) at *Ant.* 20.244 corrects this (see 14.97). A reconstruction of this crucial period would then be as per [Table 2.1](#).

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Hyrcanus held royal power for less than three years—about two years under his mother while being groomed for kingship during her illness, and a short while after her death. After Hyrcanus's defeat, Aristobulus ruled as king, and probably also as high priest (see *Ant.* 14.41, 97; 15.41; 20.243) from 66–63, a period of two and a half years (*Ant.* 20.243–4). Hyrcanus was reinstated as high priest from 63 onward, although *Ant.* 14.97 and 20.244 disagree on the length of Aristobulus's time in office. The latter is more likely correct, as also in saying that Hyrcanus was forced to give up kingship in 63 BCE, though he continued to be political figurehead and high priest.

Alexandra Salome's reign was important in Herod's story: Herod was born about 73 BCE, in the middle of her reign; her time in power included the period when Antipater, Herod's father, appeared publicly on the scene; and the strife between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus in that period created the situation in which Antipater, “a man of action and a trouble-maker” (*Ant.* 14.8), and his son Herod could occupy the vacuum (Schalit 1972, 564–6).

Antipater

Josephus introduces Antipater neatly at this point. He sets out his first

comments from different vantage points: in *War* 1.123 Antipater is an “old and bitterly hated foe of Aristobulus”; in *Ant.* 14.8–9 he is a “friend of Hyrcanus” who believed that Aristobulus “wrongly held royal power,” having usurped his brother’s position (a view deriving from Nicolas). Some essential points about Antipater can be pieced together from the two accounts: (1) he was wealthy; (2) his influence rested in large part on being governor (*stratēgos*) of Idumea, appointed by Janneus (*Ant.* 14.10); (3) his power depended on his father’s courting of Arabs, Gazans, and Ascalonites; (4) he believed that Aristobulus should be removed; (5) he encouraged Hyrcanus to feel wronged; (6) he persuaded Hyrcanus to flee to Petra, after securing Aretas’s support by promising to return a dozen Nabatean cities (*War* 1.123–6; *Ant.* 14.8–18). Josephus says Antipater’s sole motivation was either to take advantage of Hyrcanus’s weakness and ineffectiveness (*Antiquities*) or fear of Aristobulus (*War*). Both motives, of course, could be correct: Hyrcanus, though not as indecisive and weak as *Antiquities* suggests, did not lust for power as Aristobulus did; and Antipater may have been concerned that he not lose his position—indeed he sought to enhance it by having an influential national position. In the conditions following the conversion of Idumeans to Judaism, Antipater found a promising opportunity to play an important role (on Herodian origins, Kokkinos 1998, 99–139).

Table 2.1 Hasmonean rulers and high priests 76–63 BCE

Royal Power	Reign	High Priest	Dates
Alexandra	76–67	Hyrcanus	76–66
Hyrcanus regent (Aristobulus in revolt 69)	69–67		
Hyrcanus	67–66	Aristobulus	66–63
Aristobulus	66–63		
[none]	---		
		Hyrcanus	63–40

During the period after Alexander Janneus’s death, there were swift changes in the exercise of royal power and high priestly rule as Alexandra’s two sons, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, struggled for dominance.

From a temporary base in Petra and with massive support from Aretas (50,000 men says Josephus in *War* 1.126; 50,000 cavalry plus men as well in *Ant.* 14.19), Antipater and Hyrcanus defeated Aristobulus and laid siege to Jerusalem early in 65 BCE. The siege was lifted by Scarus,

Pompey's general in Syria, who seized the opportunity for direct Roman influence.

Josephus inadvertently underscores the nation's religious tensions in the midst of his account in *Antiquities*. Despite the fact that Hyrcanus was high priest, most priests in Jerusalem remained loyal to Aristobulus. If the question were legitimacy, it would be understandable if some priests wanted a high priest from Onias's line, the high priest deposed by Antiochus IV Epiphanes a century earlier. Hyrcanus's supporters asked another Onias—a righteous man with a reputation as a prophet—to curse Aristobulus (*Ant.* 14.22–4). Instead he prayed for retribution on Hyrcanus and was then stoned to death. Was this Onias Rabbinic tradition's Honi the circle drawer? Was he a descendant of the deposed priestly family? Why did Onias prefer Aristobulus? Perhaps the preference for Aristobulus is explained by the notion that religious affiliation was more important than descent: a Sadducaic Aristobulus was preferable to a Pharisaic Hyrcanus, despite Hyrcanus being the eldest son of the previous high priest. Perhaps ignoring traditional notions of legitimacy was a precursor of later manipulation of the office.

Scaurus, Pompey's quaestor, settled the brothers' conflict while Pompey was busy in Armenia. When the combatants offered him roughly equal bribes as he marched from Damascus to Jerusalem (spring 65 BCE), he filled his pockets with Aristobulus's offer (*War* 1.127–8; contrast *Ant.* 14.31) and ordered Hyrcanus and Aretas to withdraw while he, Scaurus, returned to Damascus. A pitched battle near the Jordan went decisively in favor of Aristobulus, whose future now seemed secure.

With the military support of the leading Roman officer and the religious support of the priestly Judean party, the younger brother had parlayed his more forceful personality into a successful *coup d'état*. Antipater and Hyrcanus went into exile, probably in Aretas's capital city Petra, for more than a year. Antipater's family—including his young son Herod—was already in Petra awaiting the outcome of the struggle for Judea's throne on which their fortunes ultimately rested. Since Petra was the home of Antipater's wife, Cypros, she and her children would have been at ease while political events unfolded. The destructive civil war between Hasmonean rivals, however, led inevitably to Rome extending her sphere of influence in the region. Rome was already on a path that would have led to sharply increased control in the east, but the fratricidal strife speeded up and reshaped the process (Sullivan 1990, 78–9, 213–17).

Notes

- 1 Josephus reports serious troubles for Herod in Galilee also (*War* 1.325–6), where partisans of Antigonus and Herod vie with each other; the Herodian group, “the men of rank who were in favor of Herod,” is the earliest reference to “the Herodians” (see [Chapter 11](#)). Samaritis was the safest place for Herod to send his family in 39 BCE, and even in 4 BCE it remained the most loyal to the dispositions in Herod’s will; it was remitted a quarter of its taxes (*War* 2.96).
- 2 Josephus is silent on these two unusual memorial buildings. There is a partial parallel described in 1 Macc. 13:25–30: The Hasmonean tomb at Modin, possibly but not explicitly walled, that included seven pyramids to the Hasmoneans in “an elaborate setting . . . surrounded . . . with tall columns adorned with trophies . . . and carved ships . . . visible to those at sea.” Hebron has six tombs to the Patriarchs and Matriarchs.

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3 From Petra to Rome (64–40 BCE)

Pompey, Gabinius, and Antipater's rise to power

Gnaeus Pompeius (106–48 BCE) was called Pompey the Great when he was only twenty-five years old, as a result of his military reputation. He entered the story of the Levant with two major successes: in 67 BCE he dealt quickly with the menace of Mediterranean pirates, mostly centered in Cilicia (Cassius Dio, *History* 36.20–3; L. Annii Florus, *Epitome* 3.6.7–14; Appian, *Mithridatic War* 92–7); Appian likens Pompey to a “king of kings,” using the Parthian royal title. In the following year after a struggle in the Senate he received responsibility for the Province of Asia and command of the armies in the Mithradatic War. These campaigns were decisively important for Rome’s expanding empire, Pompey’s personal reputation, and Judea and its neighbors (Leach 1978, 66–101).

Mithradates VI of Pontus (120–63 BCE) and Tigranes I of Armenia (ca. 94–56 BCE) resisted Rome’s growing aspirations to control the east; Tigranes took over Syria for part of the period and Mithradates was in direct conflict with Rome as early as 88 BCE. As Cicero put it, this was “their opportunity to seize the province of Asia” (Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 36). Pompey was in Cilicia resettling the defeated pirates, many in new cities such as Pompeiopolis, when word came of his new command against Mithradates. After gathering the available troops and setting up a naval blockade around the coast of Asia Minor, Pompey covered his flank by an alliance with Phraates III of Parthia (designed to keep Tigranes busy) and then pursued Mithradates. Following difficult maneuvers in Galatia, Cappadocia, Pontus, and farther into the Caucasus, Mithradates was driven north along the Black Sea’s eastern coast (see [Map 2.1](#)). Pompey then turned to Armenia, aided by the defection of Prince Tigranes who had joined Phraates in an attack on the kingdom of King Tigranes, father of the younger Tigranes. The elder Tigranes submitted, and in a typically generous gesture Pompey allowed

him to retain the kingship of Armenia but stripped him of all territories acquired by conquest, including parts of Syria, Cilicia, Phoenicia, Cappadocia, and Sophene. He gave the latter kingdom to Prince Tigranes as thanks for his support, promising he would inherit Armenia on his father's death. Prince Tigranes' subsequent actions, however, soon resulted in his deposition and execution.

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Instead of extending Rome's borders east of the Euphrates, Pompey chose to influence matters through his allies, King Tigranes and King Phraates. While the main purpose of the eastern campaign was concluded in 66 BCE, he still had to pacify the Caucasus and settle affairs in Syria. Pompey took on the Caucasus himself, and sent Gabinius to Syria in mid-65 BCE.

Syria was disintegrating, with rival claimants to the throne, Antiochus XIII, last of the Seleucids, and Philip II, a pretender who held power from 67–65 BCE. Pompey confirmed Antiochus in power in 65 BCE; at about the same time two of his legates took Damascus (Schürer 1973, 1.134–6) and Scaurus was deputed to sort out the dynastic problems in Judea late in 65 or early in 64. As noted earlier ([Chapter 2](#)), he accepted Aristobulus's bribe and ordered Aretas and Hyrcanus to withdraw, actions that put the young Herod and his father Antipater in Petra.

Meanwhile, Pompey was mopping up Mithradates' kingdom and arranging for the governance of these new Roman areas, facing numerous issues: tribute, loans, candidates for thrones, boundaries, garrisons, local customs, the *lex provinciae*, and rewards (Leach 1978, 88–9). After shaping that region's future, he moved from the Black Sea through Cappadocia¹ and Commagene to Syria by late 64, where he deposed Antiochus XIII (reversing his earlier decision), annexed Syria, and created another new province that incorporated land held by Arab princes (see [Chapter 7](#)). He settled problems in Apamea and Tripolis, including the “fortress of Lysias, of which the Jew Silas was lord” (*Ant.* 14.40), apparently north of Apamea (Schürer 1973, 1.237, n.14; Sullivan 1990, 79–80). Pompey came into the Beka'a Valley, through Heliopolis (Baalbek) and Chalcis, and thence over the Anti-Lebanon range to Damascus.²

Aretas III was a different matter; Nabatea was rich, powerful, influential, and significant geopolitically (Shatzman 1991, 129–32), so Pompey handled him carefully, but fortunately there was no pressing issue. Neighboring Judea, however, posed a different problem, because

Scaurus's support of Aristobulus in 65 BCE had merely delayed a decisive struggle. In 64 BCE the same players still faced each other: Aristobulus with Roman support against Hyrcanus and Antipater with Nabatean support.

The parties sent delegations to Pompey in Damascus; later they appeared in person. Josephus's two accounts (*War* 1.131–3; *Ant.* 14.34–6) differ but a reasonable conclusion seems to be that Antipater (for Hyrcanus) and Nicodemus (for Aristobulus) appeared in Damascus in the fall of 64 and in the spring of 63 the principals went to Damascus. Aristobulus then left Damascus for Dium and Judea shortly after arriving. He made several fateful mistakes: accusing Gabinius and Scaurus of accepting bribes (they had, of course, but it was stupid to accuse them publicly); having young supporters with too great a sense of their own importance; and leaving Damascus in high dudgeon over some real or fancied slight. He sent Pompey a beautiful golden vine—possibly a decoration from the Temple—intended as a bribe, but since Pompey did not need the bribe, he deposited it in the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome. Aristobulus rested his case on Hyrcanus's weaknesses, while Hyrcanus rested his case on his own legitimacy. Both had Judean supporters reinforcing their claims, while an independent delegation made a third case, arguing for a return to a purer form of theocracy, a view expressed more than once in the years to come. Schürer (1973, 1.237) argues that this was a delegation of “the Jewish people,” but it was more plausibly from the priestly aristocracy. In its strong form their argument had three propositions: the nation was supposed to obey the priests of God; both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus were trying to change that theocracy; the result would be that the nation would become slaves (*Ant.* 14.41). In this form the argument was unconvincing and overlooked much of the history from Saul to the Maccabees, but it testified to a religious conservatism connected not to royal power but to the priestly aristocracy. The competing positions reflected growing social and religious divisions in the country.

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Pompey decided not to decide (*Ant.* 14.46). He faced a potentially dangerous civil disturbance, created by Scaurus's preference for the younger and more vigorous brother who held *de facto* power to the disadvantage of the rightful claimant, Hyrcanus, who had a strong allied force but a smaller piece of territory, perhaps Idumea (see *Ant.* 14.42). According to Josephus, Pompey worried that Aristobulus could “incite the country to rebellion,” just as he was concerned with Hyrcanus's Nabatean allies. He waited to settle the dispute, therefore, until he

should arrive in Judea (*Ant.* 14.46). In *Ant.* 14.48 Josephus alludes to a Roman army being prepared to march against Nabatea, which may hint that Pompey had already decided in favor of Aristobulus. It may also hint at a half-formed intention to draw Nabatea under Roman control. At this point, faced with Pompey's uncharacteristic indecision, Aristobulus, in a serious miscalculation, left Damascus for Judea. Absenting himself from Pompey's circle without leave and at a delicate stage in the negotiations was political naiveté at best; more likely an arrogant breach of etiquette.

Pompey pursued Aristobulus past Pella, across the Jordan to Alexandreion, the most important among a line of Hasmonean fortresses along the Jordan valley (Shatzman 1991, 72–82). Aristobulus was indecisive against superior Roman forces, first trying to curry Pompey's favor and then making a show of resistance. He retired to a divided Jerusalem, with Gabinius, Pompey's legate, in pursuit. Aristobulus faced the inevitable siege by Pompey (*War* 1.138–54; *Ant.* 14.54–74), who could not let Aristobulus get away with such defiance. Aristobulus may have had support of a majority determined to resist Roman intervention, but Hyrcanus's supporters opened the city's gates while those intent on war gathered in the Temple precincts to continue their resistance.

The siege lasted three months. Jerusalem fell in the autumn of 63 BCE (*War* 1.149; *Ant.* 14.66) with a considerable slaughter of the defenders (Schürer 1973, 1.239–40, n.23). Pompey entered the temple's Holy of Holies (*War* 1.152–3; *Ant.* 14.72–3), though he did not touch anything "because of his piety, and . . . virtuous character." The next day the Temple was ritually purified at Pompey's orders and sacrifices were offered again. The internal strife is well captured in the Psalms of Solomon (late first century BCE from an anti-Hasmonean perspective), which shows vividly that a segment of the population was opposed to the leadership and aspirations of the Maccabees:

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Arrogantly the sinner broke down the strong walls

with a battering ram and you did not interfere.

Gentile foreigners went up to your place of sacrifice;

they arrogantly trampled [it] with their sandals.

Because the sons of Jerusalem defiled the sanctuary of the Lord,

they were profaning the offerings of God with lawless acts.

...

The beauty of his glory was despised before God;
it was completely disgraced.

The sons and daughters [were] in harsh captivity,
their neck in a seal, a spectacle among the gentiles.

(Psalms of Solomon 2:1–6)

I heard a sound in Jerusalem, the holy city.

My stomach was crushed at what I heard;

...

They stole from the sanctuary of God
as if there were no redeeming heir.

They walked on the place of sacrifice of the Lord,
[coming] from all kinds of uncleanness;

...

[God] brought someone from the end of the earth, one who attacks in strength;
he declared war against Jerusalem, and her land.

The leaders of the country met him with joy. They said to him,
“May your way be blessed. Come, enter in peace.”

They guarded the rough roads before his coming;
they opened the gates to Jerusalem, they crowned her city walls.

He entered in peace as a father enters his son’s house;
he sets his feet securely.

He captured the fortified towers and the wall of Jerusalem,
for God led him in securely while they wavered.

(Psalms of Solomon 8:4–5; 11–12; 15–19)

Hyrcanus, one of the leaders who met Pompey “with joy” and helped him enter securely as if into a son’s house, was reinstated as high priest as a reward for his support and for keeping the rest of the country quiet; some leaders were executed; tribute was demanded of Judea (Appian,

Pompey redistributed land and political relationships in Judea—as he had in Pontus, Armenia, and Parthia—with two complementary goals: to weaken more powerful states and cement his numerous client relationships. The former was obvious in Judea, where he liberated more than a dozen cities, mainly those in the interior whose origins went back to Alexander the Great’s program, together with the coastal cities that had fallen into Judea’s hands during the Maccabean conquests, including Gadara, Hippos, Scythopolis, Pella, Samaria, Jamnia, Marisa, Azotus, Arethusa, Gaza, Joppa, Dora, Straton’s Tower, and Dium. The freed cities were to be administered through the new province of Syria, where other territories were stripped away. Josephus explicitly refers to cities of Coele-Syria and to a “Roman governor appointed for that purpose” (*War* 1.155; *Ant.* is less clear). The geographical realities are uncertain, but he probably means that regions north and east of Panias and Mount Hermon acquired by the Maccabees were returned to Syria proper, likely including Pella, Dium, Gerasa, Gaulanitis, Seleucia, and Gamla, taken in Janneus’s campaigns east of the Jordan (Schürer 1973, 1.236 and n.25). Pompey’s intention was unmistakable, as he “confined the nation within its own boundaries” and laid it under tribute (*War* 1.154–5), since Hasmonean expansion had transgressed natural borders.

Pompey thought to solve the familial problems by sending Aristobulus and his children to Rome. On the way, Alexander, the eldest son, escaped and made his way back to Judea where he raised a large force, took Jerusalem, and almost “deposed” Hyrcanus (*War* 1.160), who “was not able to hold out against Alexander” (*Ant.* 14.82). Obviously Alexander had more popular support, especially in Jerusalem, than Hyrcanus and Antipater. Only when Gabinius and Mark Antony arrived could they gain control, and even after Jerusalem had been taken from him Alexander held out in Alexandreion, Hyrcania, and Macherus, fortresses that continued to be safe houses into the late first century CE.

Pompey dawdled on the way to Rome, arriving for his triumph only in the winter of 62/61 BCE. According to Appian (*Mithridatic War* 116–17), the magnificent procession included 324 satraps, sons, and generals of the kings he had defeated, including Tigranes, five sons of Mithradates, and Aristobulus king of the Jews, among others. It highlighted Mithradates’ twelve-foot-high solid-gold statue, images of those not present in the procession, and representations of battle scenes.

Aretas the Nabatean was not in the procession but listed in an accompanying record. At its conclusion, says Appian, Pompey

did not put any of the prisoners to death as had been the custom of other triumphs, but sent them all home at the public expense, except the kings. Of these Aristobulus alone was at once put to death and Tigranes somewhat later.

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Appian's details do not cohere with those of Josephus, who refers to Aristobulus's subsequent actions with a different death (*War* 1.171–84; *Ant.* 14.92–7, 123–6; cf. Pliny, *NH* 7.97–8).

Josephus's narrative then turns to the Nabatean problem. Pompey sent Scaurus, who reached a negotiated settlement (as Appian also implies) in which Aretas pledged obedience. A coin minted by Scaurus in 58 BCE shows King Aretas kneeling suppliant beside a camel: M. SCAUR. AED. CUR. EX S. C. REX ARETAS. The army mustered against Aretas had already been used against Aristobulus, whose duplicity or pride put him in the same category as Tigranes, the young prince who came over to Pompey's side and then reneged on the deal. Antipater emerged as the key figure in the settlement with Aretas in three respects. (1) He relieved Scaurus when the Roman army faced a lack of food and provisions. (2) As a relative of Aretas he successfully negotiated an end to the hostilities, because (3) he personally guaranteed Aretas's payment of the 300-talent tribute (*Ant.* 14.80–1; *War* 1.159 lacks the third point).

A five-year gap in Josephus's narrative must have been filled with important events, not least guerrilla warfare organized by Aristobulus's son Alexander. Alexander was successful enough that he acquired control of Jerusalem, but not so threatening that the governor of Syria intervened. When Gabinius, however, who was familiar both with the region and the main players, returned as governor in 57 BCE after being consul in Rome in 58 BCE, he moved against Alexander (Schürer 1973, 1.245–46; Sullivan 1990, 208–23). Alexander countered the threat by refortifying Alexandreion, Hyrcania, and Macherus. In the ensuing battles between Gabinius and Alexander, one near Jerusalem and two at Alexandreion, a young Mark Antony distinguished himself (*War* 1.162–7; *Ant.* 14.84–9).

Through these events in the mid-50s, Hyrcanus retrieved custody of the Temple; with the support of the priests Alexander had replaced him, it seems, as high priest for a portion of the troubled period, though Josephus does not actually say this. The civil administration was altered when Gabinius divided the country into five districts (*synodoi*), each

with its own council (*synedrion*): “The Jews welcomed their release from the rule of an individual [i.e. from monarchic rule] and were from that time forward governed by an aristocracy” (*War* 1.170).

This summary is a trifle optimistic, for almost immediately Aristobulus escaped from detention in Rome and returned to Judea, where he raised a large force of supporters and rebuilt Alexandreion—the key to holding the center of the country. When Gabinius sent an army—one of whose leaders was again Mark Antony—Aristobulus retreated across the Jordan to Macherus, his army was defeated and he was captured. He was returned to Rome in chains but his children, including both Alexander and Antigonus who figured prominently in what followed, were allowed to stay in Judea, as agreed with their mother.

Antipater continued to make himself useful to Gabinius and Rome, most notably in the campaign in Egypt that was intended to restore Ptolemy XII Auletes to the throne. In this unwise foray Gabinius interfered in another province, mostly for his own enrichment. At first the Jewish colony at Leontopolis, a military border post (Barclay 1999, 35–41; Richardson 2004, [chapter 10](#)), tried to stop the combined forces of Gabinius and Antipater (*Ant.* 14.99). Wisely, they let the army go by unopposed.

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Meanwhile Aristobulus escaped from Rome, raised a revolt in Judea, was captured, and was taken to Rome again. At the same time Alexander revolted and came to power (*Ant.* 14.100; differently in *War*), though it is doubtful that he ruled since the revolt was short-lived. Antipater, “a man of good sense,” interceded with the rebels (*Ant.* 14.101), demonstrating his growing role in Judean affairs; as a result, some rebels changed sides, but most did not and a pitched battle was fought near Mount Tabor in Lower Galilee (*Ant.* 14.102). When control was re-established Gabinius re-organized Judea’s government in accord with Antipater’s wishes (*War* 1.178; *Ant.* 14.103). Antipater’s wishes are left unstated, but it is not unreasonable to imagine that an important role for himself was on the list. Schürer (1973, 1.267) speculates that Hyrcanus stood in some way “at the head of the government of the country . . . subject only to the control of the Roman general.” To conclude this chaotic sequence of events, Gabinius marched against the Nabateans and then returned to Rome, where, despite Josephus’s encomiastic summary of his career—he performed great and brilliant deeds while governor in 57–55 BCE (*Ant.* 14.104)—he was tried for

extortion and *maiestas* (found guilty of the first, acquitted on the second). Cicero acted on the losing side in both cases.

Four features of Josephus's account stand out. (1) A major part of the combined army was Antipater's, with Antipater standing in place of Hyrcanus for the first time, implying that in the previous five-year period Antipater had acquired more power and responsibility. (2) Gabinius, after putting down a series of revolts by Aristobulus and his sons, felt it necessary to rebuild a number of cities that had been ravaged in the earlier difficulties with Pompey (*Ant.* 14.88), though some may have been more recently destroyed in guerrilla actions. (3) Hyrcanus retained his formal role as high priest and his nominal role as *de facto* leader of Judea, providing continuity and a semblance of local autonomy. (4) Antipater dominated the political life of Judea through his skillful management of relations with Rome and his willing recognition that Rome had to be appeased.

Caesar and Cassius

The Judean die was cast. Hyrcanus occupied the leading position, though Antipater overshadowed him. Aristobulus was in decline; he and his children had attempted on several occasions to wrest power from Hyrcanus, each time unsuccessfully. Rome was unsympathetic to the younger brother's claims, not to mention that his position was weakened by ineffective allies. The future lay with Antipater and his children, though that was not yet apparent in the 50s BCE. What was apparent was that Antipater and his family could not act independently of Rome, so Judea's future depended more on what happened in Rome than on events in Judea. For Rome the most important questions were social and political—the machinations of rival claimants for power in the unrest that had gripped Rome for half a century. Who would win was not yet clear. For Judea and Antipater, the question was personal: whom should one support in the final scenes of the Roman Republic?

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In 54 BCE Marcus Licinius Crassus Dives, a member of the first triumvirate with Caesar and Pompey formed in 59 BCE, replaced Gabinius as governor of Syria. Crassus chose "Syria and the adjacent country because he wanted a war with the Parthians, which he thought would be easy as well as profitable" (Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.18). To raise money for the campaign he stripped the temple in Jerusalem of its gold, including 2,000 talents left untouched by Pompey nine years earlier;

Josephus elaborates the details of this theft (*Ant.* 14.105, lacking in *War*), information drawn, apparently, from one or both of Nicolas of Damascus and Strabo (*Ant.* 14.104). Crassus died near Carrhae in the disastrous expedition the following year (*War* 1.179; Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.18; *Syrian Wars* 51). The Parthian menace was held back by Cassius—later to be one of Caesar’s assassins—who had been with Crassus but escaped and was back in Syria. After securing Syria, Cassius traveled through Tyre to Judea, where he bound Alexander to keep the peace (*War* 1.182), putting down a revolt of supporters of Aristobulus at Tarichea (Magdala) on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He sold captives into slavery and executed Peitholaus, the leader, at Antipater’s request (*War* 1.180; *Ant.* 14.120).

Herod is introduced at this point in Josephus’s narrative in a very restrained way: “Herod, who later became king.” The Parthian menace still hovered over Rome, Antipater and Cassius were in a friendly relationship, and Cypros was ensconced in Petra with Antipater’s children (*War* 1.181; *Ant.* 14.121). Josephus says more about Antipater: his marriage to the noble Cypros, his cultivation of important friends, and his confidence in the king of Arabia—perhaps connected by marriage—regarding his children’s safety.

Roman politics, meanwhile, was becoming increasingly dangerous. After his triumph Pompey immersed himself in political activity, for much of the period 59–55 BCE as an ally of the fast-rising Julius Caesar. When Gabinius returned from his governorship of Syria in 54 BCE, only to be charged with treason, extortion, and bribery, Pompey faced a crisis, for the charge of treason, which derived from Gabinius’s expedition to Egypt to restore Ptolemy to the throne, was seen as an indirect attack on Pompey. Pompey needed Gabinius to be acquitted, and in this he was successful, though Cicero scathingly attributes the result to the prosecutor’s incompetence and a corrupt jury (Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 4.18 [letter 92]), a letter that refers to a “whiff of dictatorship in the air”).

The informal coalition between Pompey and Caesar was breaking up, with increasing friction between them, and by 50 BCE Caesar’s star was ascendant as he threatened Rome from the north. Octavian’s coins later used the star as a symbol of Julius Caesar and his apotheosis. The *sides Iulium* is found numismatically on statues of Caesar and in the pediment of the Temple of Divus Iulius (Zanker 1990, 33–6).

Josephus laconically connects Rome's extreme danger with Judea's affairs: "when Pompey fled with the Senate across the Ionian Sea, Caesar, now master of Rome and the Empire, set Aristobulus at liberty," putting two legions at his disposal with instructions to undercut Pompey's strength in the east by bringing Syria and Judea over to Caesar's camp (*War* 1.183; *Ant.* 14.123; Cassius Dio 41.18.1). Caesar's principle was familiar: my enemy's enemy is my friend. Since Pompey decisively backed Hyrcanus, Caesar freed Hyrcanus's enemy to trouble Pompey. Pompey effectively stymied Caesar's strategy by having the proconsul of Syria (Pompey's father-in-law) poison Aristobulus and behead Aristobulus's son Alexander, a popular but troublesome leader. His younger brother, Antigonos, and other members of the family were protected by King Ptolemy of Chalcis, to whom they were related (*War* 1.239).

Over the next eighteen years, changes in the balance of power in Rome brought about convulsions in Judean politics, frequently requiring a fast about-turn in political allegiances, changes exemplified by Josephus's casual statement, "Antipater, on the death of Pompey, went over to his opponent and paid court to Caesar" (*War* 1.187; cf. *Ant.* 14.127). Pompey's defeat at Pharsalus and subsequent death in Egypt (August/September 48 BCE) jeopardized the position of Antipater (and we might add Hyrcanus, though Josephus does not mention him here). We should dismiss the view that Antipater had a longstanding "plan" or "ambition" to use the weak Hyrcanus to his own ends and to seize power, a plan that is purported to go back to the early 60s BCE (Jones 1967, 16–34; contrast Grant 1971, 41). Such a view poses two interlocking difficulties: (1) What was Antipater's role? (2) What was the relationship between Antipater and Hyrcanus?

What was Antipater's role? Antipater had a strong power-base in Idumea among his own people; even if he was not unopposed there—and we can imagine competing political, social, and religious programs—Idumea was his main base. But he also had strong marital links with the Nabatean royal family so that it too could be considered a region of influence and support (*War* 1.187; *Ant.* 14.121–2). In addition, Antipater made common cause with minor Syrian dynasts such as Iamblichus (*War* 1.188; *Ant.* 14.129; Sullivan 1990, 200–2), a facet of a larger policy to develop attachments among "influential persons" who could buttress his growing influence. Antipater had observed such connections among his Roman friends—a system of client relationships involving reciprocal responsibilities and benefits. Such relationships would eventually result in a series of marital links involving his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

At the same time Antipater received additional responsibilities, the specifics of which are difficult to pin down. Three terms are used, inconsistently:

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stratēgos: “general, leader, commander”; in Asia Minor, “chief magistrate of cities”; in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, “military and civil governor of a nome”; in Jerusalem, “officer with custody of the Temple”; in Alexandria, “superintendent of police” (so LSJ). The word is used of Antipater (*Ant.* 14.10); of Herod (*Ant.* 14.180, 280; *War* 1.213, 225); of Phasael and Herod (*War* 1.203; *Ant.* 14.158); of Gabinius (*Ant.* 14.103); and of Murcus (*War* 1.224).

epitropos: “one in charge, trustee, administrator”; “governor, viceroy, executor, guardian” (LSJ). *Epitropos* is used of Antipater (*War* 1.199; *Ant.* 14.143), while the verb is used of Herod and Phasael (*War* 1.244) and of all three (*Ant.* 14.166).

epimeletēs: “manager, curator”; as an official title, of sacred matters or financial matters (e.g. Athens), of the market, harbor, weights and measures, of a magistrate; in Egypt, financial officer; deputy of an Emperor holding honorary local office (LSJ). The word is used of Antipater (*Ant.* 14.127; quoting Strabo in 14.139); of Herod (*War* 1.225; contra *Ant.* 14.280; Schalit 1972, 40–1, esp. n.126).

The distribution of these terms among the main participants overlaps, and it is not clear if there is some significance to their use. It would not go far amiss, however, to think Antipater’s role combined military and financial roles under Hyrcanus, with a broad sphere of influence (the most efficient explanation of the varying terms). A similar vagueness attaches to descriptions of Herod.

As for the question of the relationship between Antipater and Hyrcanus, Josephus’s view is shown most clearly at *War* 1.183–94 and *Ant.* 14.127–37, where Antipater acted energetically on behalf of Caesar. He assisted a Pergamene force under Mithridates (different from Mithradates of Pontus discussed earlier in this chapter) to cross the border at Pelusium; he got an Arabian (Nabatean) force to join them; he persuaded the Jewish garrison at Leontopolis to let them past; and he led the charge in military engagements in Egypt. The result was that Antipater became a client of Caesar’s, getting Roman citizenship and freedom from taxation into the bargain, while Hyrcanus was confirmed as high priest. From now on, “the entire dynasty of Herod I could properly bear the *nomen* Julius” (Sullivan 1977, 313); Antipater would have been, in Roman terms, Gaius Julius Antipater, and family members would have adopted similar names, such as Gaius Julius Herodes, and so on.

Josephus’s method of dealing with these matters is transparently

rhetorical. War's view that Hyrcanus was inactive and was confirmed as high priest only to please Antipater (perhaps taken from Nicolas of Damascus) is complemented by Antipater's exaggerated role. Nicolas's intention, continuing into the Herod story, was to undercut Hyrcanus (Schwartz 1994, 210–32). *Antiquities* repeats this view, though less strongly, a view that is modified by three other sources available to him: Strabo, following Asinius Pollio, says that “Hyrcanus, the high priest of the Jews, also invaded Egypt,” and Strabo, following Hypsicrates (possibly a freed slave of Caesar's), says that “the high priest Hyrcanus also took part in the campaign” (*Ant.* 14.138–9). Later on, Josephus cites a series of decrees and documents he knows, apparently from Rome. For example, he cites a decree of Julius Caesar (*Ant.* 14.190–5), promulgated as he completed his Egyptian campaign and was on his way back to Rome via Syria (47 BCE), saying Hyrcanus showed loyalty and zeal (*pistin kai spoudēn*) by coming to Caesar's side in Egypt with 1,500 soldiers, soldiers Caesar sent to Mithridates. Elsewhere Josephus says *Antipater* came with 3,000 soldiers to the aid of Mithridates (*Ant.* 14.139), while the decree in 14.211–12 makes no mention of Antipater. There is some confusion about the relative roles and importance of Hyrcanus and Antipater.

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In his long poem on *The Civil War*, Lucan mentions neither Hyrcanus nor Antipater (nor even Judea), but he leaves little doubt of the danger Julius Caesar faced in Alexandria, especially from Cleopatra's machinations: “As soon as Caesar . . . reached the land . . . his fortune and the destiny of guilty Egypt contended whether . . . the Memphian [Egyptian] sword should rid the world of the victor's head as well as of the loser's” (Lucan, *Civil War*, 10.1–5). Caesar found himself surrounded from both land and sea: “There was no path of safety either in flight or in valour; he could scarcely hope even for honorable death” (Lucan, *Civil War*, 10.538–41). Lucan assists in understanding Caesar's gratitude to those—like Hyrcanus and Antipater—who showed “loyalty and zeal,” and this from an author who was not a fan of Caesar.

Hyrcanus “surpassed in bravery all those in the ranks,” so he and his children were confirmed as high priests and ethnarchs “in accordance with their national customs” and given jurisdiction over their “manner of life”; they were also freed from the imposition of billeted troops in the grants published in Rome, Tyre, Sidon, and Ascalon (*Ant.* 14.196–8), dealing with Hyrcanus's role. We need not concern ourselves with the decrees' specific provisions, several of which are controversial, except to observe that none mentions Antipater's link with Hyrcanus. In several

decrees Hyrcanus, ethnarch and head of state, sent envoys to confirm treaties with Rome (*Ant.* 14.185, 217, 222, 223, 233, 241 [Hyrcanus I?], summary at 14.265).

The point is that despite Josephus's quotations from both literary and epigraphic sources showing that he knows from Roman documents a more generous view of Hyrcanus, Josephus has no place for Hyrcanus in *his* account of the Egyptian campaign and implies Hyrcanus is elsewhere (as, for example, when Antipater shows a letter from Hyrcanus to Jews at Leontopolis; *Ant.* 14.131). Most of the time Josephus emphatically notes Antipater's role. Regrettably, we have no independent evidence of the relationship between Caesar and Antipater, though a decree dated 44 BCE (*Ant.* 14.200–1) refers to “these persons” who “shall receive and fortify the city of Jerusalem”; this may allude to Antipater because it was he who rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. At the very least it was someone distinct from Hyrcanus in the second half of the same sentence.

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Though Hyrcanus was likely present with Caesar's forces in Egypt, the spotlight in *War* falls on Antipater because of his energy, determination, bravery, and leadership (*War* 1.193–4). Josephus implies that Antipater held the real power and Hyrcanus was a mere figurehead. But this implication is grossly exaggerated. Hyrcanus was not only present but actively involved, well known to Caesar for his bravery, rewarded on his own account, not Antipater's.

Antipater resisted Antigonus's appeal to Caesar when faced with his new challenge, for Antigonus had picked up the cudgels against Hyrcanus II following his father's and brother's deaths. The result was that Hyrcanus was confirmed as high priest and Antipater was made *epitropos* (*War* 1.195–200; *Ant.* 14.140–3). But in *Antiquities* when Josephus immediately cites two senatorial decrees concerning Jews, he mistakenly uses documents referring to Hyrcanus I as if they pertained to Hyrcanus II, concluding with a statement about the honor paid to Hyrcanus (*Ant.* 14.144–55). Despite this error, Josephus underscores the importance of Hyrcanus II that contradicts his own rhetorical evaluation of Hyrcanus's passivity.

For Josephus, in both *War* and *Antiquities*, Antipater rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, he put down local disturbances, he accompanied Caesar from Egypt through Syria, he cajoled and threatened, and he organized the reconstituted regime (*War* 1.201–3; *Ant.* 14.156–7). In Josephus's view, Antipater played the leading role. Hyrcanus was “sluggish” and

“without sinew,” the former word (*nōthē*, *War* 1.203; *Ant.* 14.158) indicating in Stoic circles a lack of fiber, the latter (*atonōteron*, *War* only) referring to animal gut used in catapults. Josephus wants us to believe Hyrcanus was gutless.

Herod's trial

In the same sentence in *Antiquities* as his description of Hyrcanus's lassitude, Josephus brings Herod onstage as his brother Phasael's junior partner. Both got important roles as strong men in the new Judean administration of Antipater and Hyrcanus. Phasael became governor (*stratēgos*) of Jerusalem and environs—with both Hyrcanus and Antipater nearby, Phasael's role must have been a strictly urban one—and Herod governed Galilee. Both *War* and *Antiquities* emphasize Herod's relative youth, fifteen years of age in *Antiquities*, but this must be corrected from *Ant.* 17.148 where Herod was about seventy when he died, giving an age of about twenty-five at this stage. Within a couple of sentences Josephus reverses the relative importance of the two brothers; to emulate his younger brother, Phasael curried favor with the population of Jerusalem, keeping the city quiet and not abusing his authority.

Herod showed his energy by catching and executing Hezekiah, father of Judas, who led a revolt in 4 BCE following Herod's death (*Ant.* 17.271). Hezekiah was a brigand-chief (*archilēstēs*; *War* 1.204–6; *Ant.* 14. 159–60; see [Chapters 2](#) and [11](#)) operating on the borders of Syria, who was troubling the Galilee. Four consequences flowed from this event: (1) Herod gained a reputation among Syrians for his decisive action (there is no mention of Galilean reactions); (2) Herod came to the attention of Sextus Caesar, governor of Syria; (3) Antipater was treated as if he were a king and ruler of the whole country (*War* 1.207; *Ant.* 14.162); (4) still, Antipater remained loyal to Hyrcanus; as Schalit puts it, “the right hand man” (Schalit 1969, 52).

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Josephus's picture becomes quite complex, and we need to understand his point: at the same time that Hyrcanus's inactivity was outweighed by Antipater's actions, Antipater's reputation in turn rested upon the abilities of his two sons, whom he had put in prominent positions. Put the other way round, their effective administration increased Antipater's credibility, and Antipater made Hyrcanus look good. Yet among them—between the two brothers and between Hyrcanus and Antipater—there

was little jealousy or resentment (though see *War* 1.208). Parts of this rosy picture are inadequate or inaccurate. Since these events are important to Josephus's picture of Herod, we turn to Josephus's description of Herod's trial on a charge of executing Hezekiah.

Malicious aristocrats (*hoi prōtoi tōn Ioudaiōn*, *Ant.* 14.165) created trouble for Herod by subverting the relationship between Hyrcanus and Antipater. Behind the complaints that resulted in a trial (McLaren 1991, 67–79) lay concern over Hyrcanus's inactivity, the pretensions of Antipater and his children (both in *War*), Antipater's growing wealth, the family's popularity, and their friendship with powerful Romans (all in *Antiquities*). The malice is virtually certain, given the class structure of society and the make-up of the court (Goodman 1987; Fenn 1992; Marshak 2011, 2014, 78–9). The accusations reflected aristocratic aspirations and concerns at being undercut by *nouveaux riches*, whose relations with Rome were significantly better than their own. In about fifteen years (from 63 to 47 BCE) Antipater and his family had leaped into prominence and formed an alternative elite, close to Hyrcanus and to Rome on whom Hyrcanus's security rested, threatening old privileges.



Figure 3.1 The Arbel caves, located on the vertical face of Mount Nitai, were the scene of Herod's defeat of the brigands who had been troubling Galilee, the place where Herod began to gain his reputation, for good or for ill. Instead of attacking from below, he lowered cages holding his soldiers from above, and flushed them out.

Josephus's narrative has an oddity at this point. The nobles raised no concerns over Antipater's origins, to judge from Josephus. While spreading dissension, they overlooked Antipater's vulnerable ethnic origins as an Idumean. Taken at face value, this suggests that the family's background was not the issue it later seemed to be, for the best opening of the members of the elite opposing the family lay in charges stemming from Herod's execution of Hezekiah and his men. This, they said, was a violation of Torah and showed that Herod, who lacked all royal authority, behaved as if he were a king. The attack worked; Hyrcanus summoned Herod to stand trial, in *Antiquities* before the Sanhedrin, while the Sanhedrin is not even mentioned in *War*.

The murdered men's mothers begged "the king" for judgment; Josephus gets Hyrcanus's title wrong consistently up to the citation of the decrees in 14.190–267, where he is correctly referred to as ethnarch. The women came to the temple in Jerusalem and daily asked for justice for their children, pleas that carried the weight of pious Jewish women, not at all the riffraff that Josephus's repeated use of "brigands" (*lēstai*) suggests. Probably they represented families dispossessed by dislocations in Galilee over the previous two generations, flowing from a growing upper class under the Hasmoneans, accommodation with Itureans, changes in land tenure following Judean extensions into Galilee, civil disturbances between the death of Queen Alexandra and Hyrcanus's confirmation in power, the Roman settlement imposed by Gabinius, and restoration of royal estates in Galilee (Fiensy 1991; Horsley 1989; Freyne 1988; Reed 2002). How Hezekiah and his band fit into these social changes is left unsaid, but it seems clear they were neither political revolutionaries nor thugs, but brigands by necessity (Richardson 2004, [chapter 2](#)), operating on the margins of society in the interstices between Galilee, Iturea, and Syria. They had support among Galileans and even Jerusalemites (only Syrians welcomed their executions); Hezekiah must have been a village leader of local stature.

Characterizing the brigands in this way helps to account for Herod's trial, though some elements still need explanation. *Antiquities*' claim that "the" (or even "a") Sanhedrin was involved is doubtful (McLaren 1991, *passim*; Sanders 1992, 472–88). Josephus uses *synedrion* for the first time here, and even ignoring the convoluted question of the dating of the Sanhedrin's origins, it is obvious there are serious discrepancies in the accounts. Alluding to the Sanhedrin is an anachronism, though it is a dominant theme of *Ant.* 14.167–80, which claims the Sanhedrin was bent on executing Herod, while Herod's threat to Jerusalem (14.181)

followed from the Sanhedrin's actions. In *War* the situation is fundamentally different and the Sanhedrin is not even mentioned (see *War* 1.210–11; Schalit 1969, 43–8; Zeitlin 1962, 372–3). *War* has no council involved in the trial, portraying Hyrcanus as the prime actor. But *War*'s description of Hyrcanus is not altogether believable—he was first jealous of Herod, then angry, then loving (1.208–11)—and the description of Herod is not altogether convincing, as he appeared with a troop large enough to protect and threaten but small enough to avoid the appearance of a coup d'état (somewhat similar in *Ant.* 14.169–70). It is hard to avoid the conclusion that *Antiquities*' insertion of the Sanhedrin into the account is just that—a retrospective insertion. *War*'s emphasis on the role of Hyrcanus is somewhat more correct: Hyrcanus made all the decisions; Herod was ultimately responsible to Hyrcanus; Hyrcanus had capital jurisdiction (McLaren 1991, 76–9; contrast Schürer 1973, 2.204–5, who argues that with Hyrcanus's appointment, the Jerusalem *synedrion*'s authority was extended to Galilee).

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The actions of Sextus Caesar fit this reconstruction better, for Sextus wanted a strong military presence in Galilee, which Herod provided, to keep his southern flank quiet. He was concerned with the danger Herod faced from powerful aristocratic enemies and an insecure Hyrcanus, who was receiving advice behind the scenes. Given that Herod's family was considered Julius Caesar's clients, the motive for Sextus to protect Herod was strong; he may well have insisted Herod be released from trial altogether (Gilboa 1979–80, 185–95). With Hyrcanus also dependent on Caesar, Sextus's obvious course of action was to ensure through advice or threats or whatever was necessary that Hyrcanus acquit Herod. Personal ties of loyalty and obligation were crucial.

The narrative in *Antiquities* concerning the Sanhedrin hearing, which is absent in *War*, describes how Herod stood before the Sanhedrin with his troops and so intimidated them that none would accuse him. Samaias, a disciple of Pollio, a Pharisee (*Ant.* 15.370; see [Chapter 11](#)), fearlessly berated Herod for his actions, his purple robe, his haircut, and his demeanor. Then, turning on Hyrcanus and the Sanhedrin, Samaias predicted in an aside that Herod would subsequently punish them and “the king.” In another aside Josephus tells readers that this actually happened, but that Herod honored Samaias both for this speech and a later one when he urged the people of Jerusalem to admit Herod and his army in 37/36 BCE.

Is this later account in *Antiquities* more accurate than Josephus's

earlier account? The marks of a retrospective insertion are rather obvious, with major strains between this incident and the main framing story (e.g. in 14.174 Samaias accused the Sanhedrin of wanting to release Herod, but when the main narrative resumes in 14.177 the Sanhedrin was bent on putting Herod to death), not to mention the artificial setting in the Sanhedrin. While it is possible that the Samaias story was an independent traditional account known to Josephus, *Antiquities* is not based on better sources at this point, and the value of this narrative for a reconstruction of the trial is almost negligible.

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The conflicts or radically different perspectives in Josephus's accounts continue. In *War* 1.211 Herod was acquitted because Hyrcanus loved him, while in *Ant* 14.177 Hyrcanus advised Herod to flee; in *War* 1.212 Herod went to Sextus in Damascus, uncertain whether Hyrcanus really wanted him acquitted, while in *Ant* 14.178 Herod went to Damascus "as if fleeing from the king." *War* has the nobles continue to inflame Hyrcanus because of Herod's greater strength, while *Antiquities* has the Sanhedrin trying to strengthen Hyrcanus, who cannot act, out of cowardice. *War* 1.213 has Herod appointed governor (*stratēgos*) of Coele-Syria and Samaritis, while *Antiquities* makes his appointment to Coele-Syria (only) dependent upon a bribe. *War*'s more restrained though still muddled account is more believable than the snide insinuations of *Antiquities*, many of which bear the marks of editorial insertions. Clearly Herod was in danger when he appeared before Hyrcanus; Hyrcanus was double-minded, in part because of the advice of his courtiers (later confused with the Sanhedrin), so Herod was released. Uncertain of his standing with Hyrcanus, he went to Damascus where Sextus gave him a military command under his jurisdiction.

Coele-Syria moves around disconcertingly in the texts (Millar 1993, 6, 423–4); here it must mean a part of the area contiguous to that which Herod had already cleared of *lēstai*: southern Lebanon/upper Galilee, or the Pnias region, or parts of Gaulanitis and Trachonitis. The clearest use of "hollow" (*koilos*) is for the Beka'a Valley (the "hollow" between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges). From this new base Herod could threaten Judea. His military strength appeared formidable, though it could not have been very great, while his jurisdiction both in Galilee and Syria enlarged his area of operations. To make matters more tense, Herod was popular "with the nation" (*War* 1.213), the Jewish people, whereas earlier *War* had portrayed him as popular only in Syria (*War* 1.205). The unsettling incident was still not over. Hyrcanus's anxiety matched Herod's anger (*War* 1.214; *Ant.* 14.180) as Herod, a hothead,

marched on Jerusalem with an army to depose Hyrcanus (the last phrase is absent from *Antiquities*, replaced by Herod's arraignment before the Sanhedrin). Antipater and Phasael cooled Herod down, telling him merely to threaten Hyrcanus, since Hyrcanus had helped him achieve such high office. In the conclusion of the complex story we have a satisfied Herod, whose show of strength before the nation was a prelude to his future expectations (*War* 1.215; *Ant.* 14.184). Both narratives assert that Hyrcanus was a beneficent friend, indeed a benefactor influenced by evil counselors. On the other hand, in both accounts Herod was the one wronged. Josephus leaves no doubt about what lay in store in the future.

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The main story lines of both Josephus's accounts are relatively clear. The relationships between Antipater and Hyrcanus and between Phasael and Herod were not threatened by these events, but there was a serious strain between the aging Hyrcanus and the young Herod, which reflected a natural rivalry between Hyrcanus's aristocratic friends and the ambitious youth who, with the support of his family, appeared to challenge Hyrcanus and his supporters because of Antipater's family's widespread power-bases. From their base in Idumea they had achieved major advances: Antipater had a nation-wide administrative role under Hyrcanus; Phasael was governor of Jerusalem and its environs; Herod was governor of Galilee, with an extended role nearby in Syria. While Josephus made the threat to Hyrcanus seem greater than it was, in reality the enhanced positions of Antipater and his two sons must have been distressing to supporters of the Hasmonean dynasty and to any who thought they ought to be able to influence the ethnarch and his future policy (McLaren 1991, 189). A reduced Hyrcanus and a rapidly rising Idumean family weakened the positions of Hyrcanus's circle, as the failure of Herod's trial—which they had instigated—had now shown.

Civil war

Pompey was assassinated in 48 BCE with the connivance of Ptolemy XIII, younger brother of Cleopatra VII (Lucan, *Civil War*, passim), but Pompey's partisans continued to influence events. In Numidia, King Juba made common cause with Republicans and followers of Pompey opposed to Caesar, among whom the leading political figure was Cato and the leading general Scipio. Caesar put down these continuing

problems in North Africa in 47/46 BCE (Julius Caesar, *African War*). In Syria, Q. Caecilius Bassus assassinated Sextus Caesar and took over the province; those loyal to Caesar (including Antipater and his sons) sent troops in 45 BCE to Apamea-on-the-Orontes (Qaalat al-Mudik) to confront Bassus (*War* 1.216–17; *Ant.* 14.268–70).

Then, on March 15, 44 BCE, Julius Caesar was assassinated. The reverberations of this “tremendous upheaval” (*War* 1.218) were felt everywhere, not least in the east where Cassius, one of the chief conspirators, arrived to take over Syria (43 BCE). Caesar had named Cassius the next year’s governor of Syria, but the Senate opposed this, so his move to Syria, like Brutus’s to Macedonia, was illegal (Appian, *Civil Wars* 4.57–9). The situation in Syria changed dramatically, as Cassius diplomatically won over Bassus and Murcus, with their twelve legions of soldiers (Appian, *Civil Wars* 4.58). He then sought to put the conspirators’ finances on a sound footing by a heavy tax on Syrian cities. Antipater had to decide immediately between his obligation to Caesar and the *de facto* power of Caesar’s assassin. Just as he had earlier changed allegiance from Pompey to Caesar, so now he shifted from Caesar to his murderers, but Cassius demanded a high price (700 talents), “exact[ing] sums which it was beyond their ability to pay” (*War* 1.219).

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“Worst of all,” says Josephus, “was his treatment of Judea” (*Ant.* 14.272), although we cannot know if Judea was treated differentially (cf. Syncellus, 1.576). Antipater called the shots in raising the sum, with no mention of Hyrcanus, perhaps a result of Nicolas’s minimizing of Hyrcanus. Hyrcanus’s coins may provide evidence that Antipater had financial oversight and minting authority if a monograph “A” or “AP” on several coins in fact refers to Antipater (Meshorer 1967, 41–52, 121–3; plates III, IV). While one might have expected Antipater to raise the money himself, he farmed out the responsibility to Phasaël and Herod and others, including Malchus,³ a Jew, friend, and supporter of Hyrcanus (*Ant.* 14.277). The sum apportioned to Herod—that is, to Galilee—was one-seventh, roughly indicating Galilee’s relative economic importance. At the close of Herod’s reign, Galilee and Peraea had an annual income of 200 talents, Philip’s territories 100, and Archelaus’s territory 400. Though these areas were not identical to the earlier areas, the one-seventh levy for Galilee in 43 BCE was less than in 4 BCE, when it was about one-fifth; to put it differently, Galilee’s GNP increased through Herod’s reign. At the same time the figures suggest that Cassius’s levy of 700 talents—equal to the annual income of the whole

kingdom in 4 BCE—was a very heavy levy.

Cassius's strategy was not entirely successful; Malchus was so slow to respond that Cassius would have executed him but for Antipater's intervention. Cassius then reduced four cities to servitude and threatened others that were dilatory; all were saved by Antipater's special gift of 100 talents, a sum that derived from Hyrcanus (and that may make up Syncellus's 800 talents). As Josephus puts it, "Hyrcanus through the agency of Antipater sent him a hundred talents of his own money and so stopped [Cassius's] hostile move" (*Ant.* 14.275). The gift was Antipater's own, according to *War* 1.222. There is an awkward tension in the accounts between Antipater's overall responsibility and his immunity from retribution when the payment was not delivered speedily enough: it is hard to reconcile his primary role, his farming out of the obligations, others' failures to comply, and his successful intercession when they failed, although the account in *Antiquities* clears up one element in the puzzle: Hyrcanus stood behind Antipater and acted in the emergency.

In *Antiquities* Josephus emphasizes—following Nicolas (?)—Herod's opportunity: he "thought it prudent to court the Romans and secure their goodwill at the expense of others" (*Ant.* 14.274; not in *War*). He moved quickly and prudentially to gather the funds so that he came to the approving attention of Cassius, the top Roman official in the east. But when Cassius left Judea in 43 bce, Malchus took the opportunity to undercut Antipater, hoping to make Hyrcanus more secure on the throne (according to *Ant.* 14.277; not in *War*). Antipater withdrew to Perea where he had to raise troops because, the narrative implies, Judean troops were under Malchus's control. This seems unexpected for someone at the right hand of the Judean ethnarch. Where was Hyrcanus? The Judean troops should have been his. If there were such a threat to Antipater that he had to flee, why is there no hint that he was estranged from Hyrcanus? Why could Herod and Phasael stay in Jerusalem when Antipater could not? Why were their forces not at Antipater's disposal, if Herod was custodian of the armory in Jerusalem and Phasael controlled the city? Was Malchus an official of Hyrcanus's or a local strong man unwilling to cooperate with the Romans, but one who saw Hyrcanus as the best figurehead? The incident challenges views that exaggerate Antipater's power and minimize Hyrcanus's.

The details get murkier. While a standoff continued between Antipater and Malchus, with a minor reconciliation effected by Herod and Phasael

(*War* 1.224), Octavian and Mark Antony set out after Cassius and Brutus, forcing Cassius to raise a Syrian army. Herod's role is unclear: *War* says that Cassius and Murcus appointed Herod *epimelētēs* (financial expert) of all Syria, putting a force of cavalry and foot soldiers at his disposal, and they promised to make him king of Judea when the war was over (*War* 1.225). On the other hand, *Ant.* 14.280 says Herod was entrusted with command of the whole army and was made *stratēgos* ("commander") of Coele-Syria—a larger responsibility, smaller title, and more limited area in southern Syria. Appian ignores Herod and says that Cassius "left his nephew in Syria with one legion" (*Civil Wars* 4.58–63). Whatever the precise role Herod played, his friendship with Cassius gave him a military role somewhere in southern Syria (in today's terms, southern Lebanon or southern Syria or northern Jordan), with some sort of force, probably small, and some promise of future honors. These uncertainties make it prudent to avoid either a maximalist or minimalist reading.

These events ultimately caused Antipater's death, as Malchus got the wind up, either because he resented Herod's future promise and present power (*War* 1.226) or because of his and Antipater's rivalry (*Ant.* 14.281). At a dinner party in the royal palace where Hyrcanus was entertaining Antipater and Malchus, Malchus had Hyrcanus's wine steward poison Antipater's wine in a successful assassination. Antipater died after leaving the banquet. We might well be curious about Malchus and Hyrcanus's relationship, so that Malchus felt able to use Hyrcanus's palace and servant for the assassination, though there is no hint in Josephus's account that Hyrcanus was implicated.

Josephus then summarizes the importance of Antipater, who is crucial to the early parts of Herod's story. The differences between *War* and *Antiquities* are not what one might have expected; Antipater is praised in both accounts, but *Antiquities* is more flowery in his praise. He is remembered as "distinguished for piety, justice and devotion (*eusebeia*, *dikaiosynē*, *spoudē*) to his country" (*Ant.* 14.283), while *War* emphasizes his role in recovering and preserving the kingdom for Hyrcanus (1.226). For a quarter-century (69–43 BCE) Antipater played a crucial role on behalf of Hyrcanus and his ethnarchy. Antipater's motives were mixed, no doubt; his support was equivocal; relations were strained: but he was reliable, astute, and powerful in defense of Hyrcanus. His promotion of his sons was not an anti-Hasmonean ploy, though promoting them led indirectly to Hyrcanus's deposition and death, which was more directly a result of the rivalry between Hyrcanus and his brother Aristobulus. There is no evidence to charge Antipater with a deliberate scheme to replace Hyrcanus and put one of his own sons on the throne. Nor was Hyrcanus simply putty in Antipater's

hands; he actively participated in decisions, in military engagements, and in dealing with Rome. We may not be in a good position to evaluate the relationship between Hyrcanus and Antipater, yet this relationship was the context for Herod's rise to prominence and power. In recounting this period, Josephus relied on Nicolas's account, which gave special prominence to Antipater and his family, especially Herod. On the other hand, assessing matters from the Roman side, Appian's account has no place for Hyrcanus, Antipater, or Herod.

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Malchus, Phasael, and Herod all played parts, each appearing scornful of Hyrcanus. While Malchus pretended to regret Antipater's death on several occasions, Herod and Phasael plotted revenge against him. Even after the wily Antipater had been assassinated, Herod and Phasael retained the confidence of Cassius, while Malchus sought to parlay broader popular support into a national revolt, taking the throne himself (*War* 1.232, 227–35; *Ant.* 14.284–93, especially 290). With Cassius's help Herod arranged Malchus's assassination at Tyre, acting in concert with “heavenly power” (*Ant.* 14.291). Herod is not shown in a favorable light, but he is indirectly portrayed supporting Hyrcanus and opposing Malchus.

Both *Antiquities* (14.292), where Hyrcanus was struck speechless at Malchus's assassination, and *War* (1.235), where Hyrcanus acquiesced in the assassination out of fear, point to another of the uncertainties that bedevil Josephus's accounts. What was the relationship of Hyrcanus and Malchus? Did Malchus intend to strengthen Hyrcanus's independence? Was Hyrcanus closer to Malchus than to Herod and Phasael? These are impossible questions to answer, but of Herod's deliberate act and of Rome's support there is no doubt.

This period (late 43/early 42 BCE) was full of confusion and trouble. Following Malchus's assassination, Malchus's friend, Helix, and Malchus's brother, apparently with Hyrcanus's support, acted against Phasael while Herod was in Damascus. After Phasael and Herod got the upper hand, a truce was arranged (*War* 1.236–8; *Ant.* 14.294–6). Herod then went to Samaritis to restore order, for it was “in a sorry condition” and “seditious” (*Ant.* 14.284; *War* 1.229). At about the same time there were disturbances in the north, because Tyre wanted the borderlands of Galilee (Millar 1993, 285–95, esp. 287–8), where Herod had his main base and sphere of activity. Herod expelled Marion, Tyre's tyrant, from Galilean territory while trying to buy Tyrian favor with his lenient treatment of Marion's soldiers. But Marion (*War* 1.239), Ptolemy of

Chalcis (*Ant.* 14.297; *War* 1.239), and Fabius, the governor of Damascus (who had been bribed to this end), conspired to bring back Antigonus, the younger son of Aristobulus II and nephew of Hyrcanus, as well as the brother-in-law of Ptolemy of Chalcis, so he could claim the throne of Judea (see further *War* 1.103, 185–6; *Ant.* 14.39, 126; 13.392, 418).

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With the eastern Mediterranean a fissiparous, volatile, and unstable region, Rome's civil disturbances provided a golden opportunity for each local strong man to carve out his own sphere of influence. Phasael and Malchus competed as warlords around Jerusalem, Herod was in charge in Galilee and possibly in Samaritis, Malchus's brother controlled several fortresses, Marion had pushed from Tyre into Galilee, Ptolemy of Chalcis threatened from the Beka'a valley, Antigonus was in position with Ptolemy on Galilee's northern flank, Hyrcanus II hedged his bets, Nabateans waited east of the Rift Valley, and the governor of Damascus feathered his own nest. Josephus reports Herod's preliminary battle with Antigonus on the border between Galilee and Chalcis, as a result of which everyone in Jerusalem accepted Herod (*War* 1.240; *Ant.* 14.299). In the next sentence he links this acceptance with Herod's engagement (*War* says marriage) to Mariamme, Hyrcanus's granddaughter. This picture might seem overwrought, with too much going on in one brief period. But the unrest in Rome and the rest of the Roman world supports Josephus's general assessment. Appian gives a not dissimilar portrayal, limited mostly to Roman issues.

In Judea the elite were pulled in several directions: toward Antigonus, the aggressive remaining member of the Hasmonean family; toward Hyrcanus, the legitimate and *de facto* holder of power; and possibly even toward Herod, a new member of Hyrcanus's extended family. Others such as Malchus, Helix, and Phasael were trying to secure their positions. The crucial question was how far to accept and act upon the realities of Roman power, one element of which was being reliable clients of those exercising power. As Lintott says, "The Romans well understood the operation of patronage and were happy to make use of existing vertical social links in order to control societies." He points out that dependent kings were clients of the Roman people (Lintott 1993, 32–6; Wallace-Hadrill 1989, [chapters 5](#) and [6](#)). Herod and Phasael accepted those realities and threw their lot in with Rome and whoever held power. Not everyone contending for precedence opted for Rome; Antigonus, in particular, went with Parthia's growing military power.

During the second century BCE Seleucid power had weakened and then, in the early first century, collapsed, a development marked in Judea by the Hasmonean revolt's success. Asia Minor saw the rise of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Commagene, among others; Syria saw the independence of Emesa, Chalcis, Palmyra, and the coastal cities (Sullivan 1990; [Chapter 4](#)). In the east the collapse encouraged Parthia's successes under Mithradates I (171–138 BCE) and Armenia's possession of Syria under Tigranes the Great (83–69 BCE). An enduring sign of Seleucid weakness was Rome's encroachment on Syria's former areas of hegemony (Appian, *Syrian Wars* 2, 15, 38, 48, 50), until Rome acted decisively to create the Province of Syria (64 BCE) and confirm Hyrcanus II as ethnarch of Judea (63 BCE). During Pompey's campaigns in the east (66–63 BCE) Rome made peace with Armenia under Tigranes, on condition that Tigranes keep the Parthians at arm's length. So Pompey confirmed an earlier provision, made in 84 BCE under Sulla, that the Euphrates would mark the line between Rome's and Parthia's interests (Sullivan 1990, 20–4, 112–20, 300–18). The downside of this arrangement was that Rome collided directly with Parthia rather than, as before, through a vassal state (CAH first series, 9.574–613; 10.71–5, 254–9; Debevoise 1938; Graham 2013; Rea 2013). With Parthia comprising an area from the Euphrates east to the Oxus River, and south to the Persian border, and bounded on the west and north by Syria, Palmyra, Commagene, Sophene, Armenia, Adiabene, and Atropatene, it meant that contact between the Mediterranean world's two great powers was limited to a relatively short span along the Euphrates River (see [Map 2.1](#)).

The establishment of the Parthian Empire under Mithradates I (171–138 BCE) and its extension under Phraates II (138–128 BCE) and Mithradates II (123–87 BCE) was similar to, but more successful than, the rise of Idumea and Nabatea: a nomadic group successfully adapted to the politics and economic realities of a settled existence. This occurred at the same time Rome incrementally extended its sphere of influence east through various acquisitions. Since both Rome and Parthia had developed impressive military capabilities, it was inevitable they would butt heads, even though their earlier relations under Sulla and then Pompey had been cordial.

The inevitable conflict came in 54 BCE, when Crassus, proconsul of

Syria (following the first triumvirate in 60 BCE and his consulship with Pompey in 55 BCE; Marshall 1976), invaded Parthia with an army based on Gabinius's troops, and with Cassius Longinus, soon to be Caesar's assassin, as quaestor. Crassus crossed the Euphrates near Zeugma (Millar 1993, 29, 66), where his army was disastrously defeated and he was killed on June 9, 53, at Carrhae (Harran), losing Rome's military standards to the Parthians under Orodes II (55–38 BCE). This ended Parthian "friendship" with Rome, with Parthia's *de facto* border shifting west to the Euphrates River. A more fateful consequence was Parthia's intent to move into Syria.

They conflicted a second time in 51 BCE when Cassius, who assumed command after his escape from Carrhae, defended Syria against a Parthian advance that reached Antioch-on-the-Orontes. Cassius's successor, Bibulus (51–50 BCE), continued to resist the Parthians by successfully promoting internal strife (Schürer 1973, 1.246–7). Then Bassus, after seizing control of Syria on behalf of Pompey, won the support of Parthia, which strengthened his defense of Apamea against Caesar (45–44 BCE). Cassius returned to Syria after Caesar's assassination to secure the east's resources for the tyrannicides. This put him in conflict with Dolabella, who had been appointed proconsul by Mark Antony, but Dolabella was defeated by Cassius, Murcus, and Bassus at Laodicea (May 43 BCE); he committed suicide, as Cassius and Brutus were to do in turn following their defeat at Philippi a year later (42 BCE). Parthia took advantage of the internecine Roman struggles, aiming to weaken Rome's power on their borders. They made an alliance with Cassius against Antony and Octavian, but the latter's success at Philippi brought Antony to Syria.

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The Parthians moved west in 40 BCE under King Orodes II, with his son Pacorus as joint king, and an army led jointly by the Roman, Q. Labienus, who had headed Cassius's embassy to the Parthian court in 43/2 but was marooned by Cassius's defeat and death. Labienus persuaded Orodes to attack the Romans in 40 BCE; he and Pacorus invaded and conquered Syria, then split their forces, with Pacorus moving south to win Phoenicia (except for Tyre) and Judea, and Labienus heading west into Asia as far as the Ionian coast.

A glimpse of the unpredictable twists and turns of the period comes from a denarius minted in 40 BCE with a portrait of Labienus on the obverse surrounded by the legend QLABIENUS.PARTHICUS. IMP., and on the reverse a horse with a quiver hanging from the saddle. The coin

combined the legendary skills of the Parthian cavalry, known for the “Parthian shot”—a mounted archer’s stratagem of riding away from enemies, then turning and shooting back toward them—with Labienus’s self-proclaimed status of “Imperator” and the title “Parthicus.” Since the first portraits of living Romans on coins were by Pompey and Julius Caesar, Labienus was following a recent innovation. His treason, as viewed by Romans loyal to Antony and Octavian, was punished by his execution at the hands of P. Ventidius Bassus (not to be confused with Q. Caecilius Bassus) after his defeat at the Cilician gates in 39 BCE. Ventidius rolled the Parthians back and reoccupied Syria and Palestine. But this runs slightly ahead of Herod’s story.

Herod and Antigonus

During the late 40s, ca. 42 BCE, Herod was betrothed to Mariamme, the granddaughter of both his rivals, Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II, through Alexander on one side and Alexandra on the other. Mariamme was born sometime between 54 and 51 BCE (Kokkinos 1998, 211, puts her birth ca. 53). Herod was infatuated with her, though she must have been well below marriageable age (Ilan 2006, 65–79), so the marriage was not consummated until 37 BCE, when she turned fifteen or sixteen. The betrothal was important for three reasons. First, Herod put aside Doris, a Jew from Jerusalem and mother of his eldest son, Antipater. We interpret *War* 1.241 to mean Doris was a person of standing in Judea (*gynaika tōn epichōriōn ouk asēmōn*; note the double negative), in conformity with 1.432 (“a native of Jerusalem”) and reading *Ant.* 14.300 as “the nation” (*gynaika dēmotin . . . ek tou ethnous*), not Herod’s nation (Idumea). *Antiquities* uses a word that could mean “commoner” though it plausibly means “from the city.”

The question of origin affects the interpretation of Antipater’s position and especially of Herod’s marriage policy (see [Chapter 12](#)), as he took on a new set of more favorable allegiances. Thus, in the second place, Herod became a grandson through marriage of Hyrcanus II, adding another factor to the rivalries in the disturbances of 42–40 BCE, perhaps explaining why Antipater fled to Perea while Herod stayed in Jerusalem. Third, Herod became related to Antigonus, Mariamme’s uncle, who had emerged as Herod’s main rival. It is difficult to evaluate how fully this betrothal brought Herod into the family of Hyrcanus and Antigonus (and of Ptolemy of Chalcis, to whom the family was also related). Recalling that betrothal was a key step in establishing bonds of obligation and reciprocal duties, it would be viewed as a significant matter, helping to consolidate Judea in the wake of Roman and Parthian

From the side of the bride, the betrothal in 42 BCE was a deliberate decision to incorporate Herod into the Hasmonean family (Grant 1971, 42–4). For his part, Herod contracted to put Doris away, so this was also a deliberate decision to sever his other ties and affirm a role within the Hasmonean household. His recent actions in Samaritis and Judea were likely carried out at the request of Hyrcanus, since Herod had no jurisdiction over either; his control over the Jerusalem armory also must have had the authorization of Hyrcanus. Since Herod's first military skirmish with Antigonus comes at this point in the narrative, Herod's betrothal to Mariamme was part of a risky policy on Hyrcanus's part. Hyrcanus was attempting to forestall a threat from Antigonus (*War* 1.240; *Ant.* 14.299), but with Antigonus under the protection of Ptolemy of Chalcis (*War* 1.239; *Ant.* 14.297), supported by Fabius, governor of Damascus, and Marion, despot of Tyre, the political situation was complicated.

The change in atmosphere worried the Jerusalem elite who were opposed to changes in the *status quo* (*War* 1.242). They sent an embassy to Mark Antony in Bithynia in 41 BCE to undercut Herod's and Phasael's positions by arguing that Hyrcanus was just titular head and that the two brothers held *de facto* power. This was a partial misrepresentation: it was obvious from his recent betrothal that Herod was the dominant brother, endorsed by Hyrcanus, no doubt on strategic grounds and without relinquishing his own power.

The frequency of delegations and informal approaches, especially to Antony as the new power in the east (*Ant.* 14.301–2; *War* 1.242), is noted by Plutarch: “obsequious rulers would flock to his door, while their wives would vie with one another in offering gifts and exploiting their beauty, and would sacrifice their honour to his pleasure” (*Antony* 24). When Herod appeared, however, he would have been received as the official representative of Hyrcanus and Judea. Josephus makes it appear that Herod was there to defend himself against accusations, and this may have been part of the purpose, but it seems impossible as a full explanation: (1) as ethnarch, Hyrcanus would be expected to send a delegation; (2) Herod was now a member of Hyrcanus's family; (3) the other delegation cannot have had Hyrcanus's blessing; so (4) there was a strong need to counter the effect of that delegation. Herod alone won the opportunity to speak to Antony, as representative of the ethnarch

and as an acquaintance through Antony's friendship with Herod's father, Antipater. A bribe smoothed the way to Antony's ear, as Josephus claims. Thus, Herod established friendly relations between Hyrcanus, Antony and himself, and he prevented an audience between Antony and his adversaries. Hyrcanus and Herod successfully switched sides for the third time, this time from Caesar's assassins to his avengers, especially Mark Antony.

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Hyrcanus swiftly sent another delegation to Antony (who had moved on to Ephesus; *War*. 1.243); this group did not include Herod. It obtained the return of some captive slaves (sold at auction by Cassius; *Ant*. 14.313) and of Judean territory (taken by Marion of Tyre from Judea (*Ant*. 14.313; 319–22), presumably the territory seized by Marion and, according to Josephus, seized back by Herod's action (*Ant*. 14.298). In sum, Antony had close relations with Hyrcanus, who appears more effective than Josephus's portrait: Antony expressed "goodwill . . . friendliest feelings . . . your interests as my own . . . the welfare both of you and your nation"; he insisted on giving "our allies undisturbed possession of whatever they formerly owned." He wrote in similar fashion to Sidon, Antioch, and Aradus (14.323).

As Mark Antony was planning a campaign against Parthia (Plutarch, *Antony* 28), he paused at Tarsus to call Cleopatra to account for her support of Cassius, though Plutarch overlooks the fact that many, including Hyrcanus and Herod, had done the same. The famous seduction scene took place on her golden barge moored in the river (Plutarch, *Antony* 25–9). Antony's messenger, Dellius, fell under her spell and advised her to go "in all the splendour her art could command," citing Homer's *Iliad* 16.162 where Hera seduces Zeus.⁴ Everything changed; Parthia was forgotten.

Antony moved to Antioch (actually its suburb Daphne), where yet another delegation of Judean nobles accused Herod and Phasaël of unspecified crimes. Hyrcanus was present this time, supporting the brothers because of the marital bond (a bond that was relevant earlier than Josephus says). Herod and Phasaël were defended by M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus (ca. 64 BCE–8 CE), originally a supporter of Brutus and Cassius who had switched allegiance to Antony—and later to Octavian—a distinguished soldier, orator, and patron of the arts. Antony heard both sides, asked Hyrcanus who was best qualified to rule, and made Herod and Phasaël tetrarchs—the first time the word is used in Josephus—entrusting them with the governance of Judea (*War* 1.244;

Ant. 14.326). Josephus's accounts (*War* 1.243–5; *Ant.* 14.324–9) may be confusing, but it is sufficiently clear that Hyrcanus was to “rule,” with the brothers having subordinate positions, despite Josephus claiming they administered the “whole of Judea.” Antony rebuffed further Judean delegations (*War* 2.245–7; *Ant.* 14.327–9). Zeitlin thinks Cleopatra instigated the various delegations to Antony, but the hypothesis is too clever (Zeitlin 1992, 1:387–8).

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Josephus awkwardly reintroduces the Parthians into the narrative, stating that two years later Pacorus occupied Syria (really just months later, in 40 BCE). Antony's failure to move on into Parthia because of his dalliance with Cleopatra and his decision to go to Alexandria with her are linked by Plutarch, no doubt correctly (contrast Appian, *Civil Wars* 5.11):

At any rate Cleopatra succeeded in captivating Antony so completely that, at the very moment when Fulvia his wife was carrying on war in Italy against Octavius Caesar in defence of her husband's interests, and a Parthian army under Labienus ... was hovering threateningly on the frontier of Mesopotamia and about to invade Syria, he allowed the queen to carry him off to Alexandria.

In the midst of these follies and boyish extravagances Antony was surprised by two reports. The first was from Rome to the effect that his brother Lucius and Fulvia ... had been defeated and forced to flee from Italy. The second ... announced that Labienus in command of a Parthian army was making himself master of Asia, from the Euphrates and Syria as far west as the provinces of Lydia and Ionia. Then at last ... Antony took the field against the Parthians and advanced as far as Phoenicia.

(Plutarch, *Antony* 28, 30)

Antony roused himself from his torpor. While in Phoenicia he changed his plans because of news from his wife Fulvia, and he sailed for Italy with 200 ships to meet Octavian and patch up their relationship. He delegated the Parthian responsibility to Ventidius, as we have already seen.

Antigonus now had a heaven-sent opportunity, for his strategy involved opposition to Rome, and Rome was being successfully opposed by Parthia. His opponents, Herod and Phasaël, had lost their protector, Cassius, who was now dead, and had transferred their support to Antony. He was unlikely to trust them very much, but in any case he had left the east, so that Pacorus, with a Parthian satrap, Barzaphranes, filled the vacuum in Syria. When Ptolemy of Chalcis died at about this time his son Lysanias maintained his father's alliance with Antigonus,

making an alliance together with Parthia, a provision of which was a promise of 1,000 talents and 500 women if Parthia were to depose Hyrcanus and give the throne to Antigonus (*War* 1.248) and “and to destroy Herod and his people” (*Ant.* 14.331).

The Parthian army advanced on Judea, Pacorus (son of King Orodes II) along the coastal route—where Tyre resisted them while Sidon and Ptolemais admitted them—and Barzaphranes through the interior. Another Pacorus, a cupbearer to Orodes’ son, went ahead to reconnoiter and help Antigonus, supported by some Jews. This small joint Parthian and Jewish force reached Jerusalem after indecisive engagements and besieged the royal palace. Hyrcanus and Phasaël skirmished with them in the marketplace (*War* 1.251), bottling up the invaders in the Temple courtyard while guarding them from adjacent houses. But local Jews siding with Antigonus killed the guard by setting fire to the houses, bringing Herod onto the scene to wreak vengeance (*War* 1.251–2; *Ant.* 14.335–6). The rural population who were arriving in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost (mid-40s BCE) supported Antigonus (*War* 1.253 and *Ant.* 14.337–90); together they held the Temple and much of the city, while Herod held the palace and Phasaël the walls. Antigonus proposed Pacorus (the cup bearer) as a mediator to resolve the stalemate. Though Herod was rightly suspicious—how could Antigonus’s ally act as mediator?—Phasaël “suspected nothing” (*Ant.* 14.341) and went off with Hyrcanus, still the effective senior person, to Barzaphranes.

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Antigonus’s scheme worked smoothly; with Pacorus allaying Herod’s suspicions, Hyrcanus and Phasaël met Barzaphranes in Galilee and were taken to Ecdippa (Achziv; Tell Akhziv), north of Ptolemais, where they learned that Antigonus had bought the kingship and that all of them, including Herod in Jerusalem, were in immediate danger. When Phasaël was urged to flee for his life, he refused to abandon Hyrcanus (*War* 1.259; *Ant.* 14.346), instead offering Barzaphranes a larger sum than Antigonus had. Phasaël’s bribe was unsuccessful, but before being confined he was able to get a message to Herod that confirmed Herod’s suspicions. Alexandra, Mariamme’s mother, reinforced his worries; in acting on Herod’s behalf Alexandra was also acting in her father’s interest (*Ant.* 14.351 corrects *War* 1.262, which says “Mariamme”). Herod fled ignominiously, with Mariamme, Alexandra, Cypros his mother, Salome his sister, his youngest brother Pheroras, his servants and supporters, and available soldiers. After engagements with both Parthians and Jews—much dramatized by Josephus or his source—he escaped, first to Masada and then to Orhesa. He left his family at

Masada, dispersed other followers throughout Idumea where he had already sent his treasure for safekeeping (*Ant.* 14.363–4; *War* 1.268), and went to Petra, seeking Nabatean assistance.

The Parthians plundered Jerusalem (though they left Hyrcanus's treasure alone out of deference to Antigonus) and countered Herod by destroying Marissa, the chief Idumean city (Avi-Yonah 1994, 3.949). They also handed Hyrcanus and Phasael over to Antigonus, who cut off Hyrcanus's ears (*Ant.* 14.366; *War* 1.270 says he bit them off) so Hyrcanus could no longer be high priest. Phasael committed suicide by beating his head against the wall of his prison (Josephus also says he was poisoned; *War* 1.271–2; *Ant.* 14.367–9). Parthia crowned Antigonus king, and held Hyrcanus captive (*War* 1.273).

The parallels between Antigonus's and Herod's routes to the throne demonstrate the period's politics: each had the support of one of the two contending major military powers; each fought his way to Jerusalem; each was supported by parts of the population and rejected by other parts; each killed the supporters of the other; each took vengeance on districts that opposed him. Herod quick-marched toward Petra, hoping to get money Antipater had deposited in Petra or a loan to cover Phasael's ransom (*War* 1.274–6; *Ant.* 14.370–3). Malichus I, the Nabatean king (ca. 56–28 BCE), refused Herod permission to enter Nabatean territory, fearing Parthian reprisals, so Herod turned west for Egypt, learning only at the border (Rhinocoroura) of Phasael's death. Though Malichus had a change of heart and sent messengers to make amends, Herod moved too quickly for them to catch up; he was unlikely in any case to accept the offer since he had decided on a bolder course of action. He pressed on to Alexandria, where Cleopatra gave him a magnificent reception and offered him a commission to head an expedition (*War* 1.279).

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Later tensions between Herod and Cleopatra might cast doubt on this offer, except for the fact both were obligated to Antony and anxious to cooperate with him. Herod turned down her offer; braving early winter weather, he sailed immediately for Rome via Pamphylia and Rhodes. After a stormy passage, he made grants to assist in Rhodes' restoration following its destruction in the civil war (*Ant.* 14.378; both *Ant.* 16.147 and *War* 1.424 mention restoration of the temple of Pythian Apollo and support of the shipbuilding industry). He got a trireme to take him to Brundisium, probably buying one, since he would not have waited while one was built, as Josephus suggests. Years later he ordered his new navy

from shipyards there.

When Herod traveled to Rome in 40 BCE, Antony and Octavian were patching up their quarrel, carving up Roman territory, the west going to Octavian, the east to Antony, and Africa to Lepidus (Plutarch, *Antony* 30). Once in Rome, Herod informed Antony of the Parthian occupation of Syria-Palestine and of his family's misfortunes. While Antony would already have heard of the Parthian advances—by Labienus in Asia Minor and by Pacorus and Barzaphranes in Syria and Palestine—few would have arrived in the dead of winter to give him a first-hand account of the most recent situation. Though Parthia occupies only a small place in Josephus's account (*War* 1.284; *Ant.* 14.379, 384), it must have been a major factor in the Senate's decision. Instead, Josephus emphasizes other personal factors: Antony's compassion for Herod and respect for his heroism as well as his dislike of Antigonus; Octavian's respect for his family's lengthy connections with Herod (*War* 1.282–3) and his wish to do Antony a favor, as well as a bribe (*Ant.* 14.382–3).

Several aspects of Herod's reception in Rome were important (discussion in Schalit 1969, 81–8). (1) Antony initiated the scheme to appoint Herod king—a title Antigonus had usurped though it had been in abeyance since 63 BCE (*Ant.* 14.382; *War* 1.282)—and pressed the idea upon Octavian, based on his reading of Herod's character. "Herod was so superior to his predecessors . . . that he received the title of king, being given that authority first by Antony and later by Augustus Caesar" (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.46; cf. Tacitus, *Histories* 5.9: "Antony gave the kingdom to Herod, and it was enlarged by the now victorious Augustus"; also Appian, *Civil Wars* 5.75). (2) Octavian did not know Herod well, but he was obligated to his family under his adoptive father's patronage network and was motivated by a strong sense of loyalty. (3) So small was the Roman world that Herod was presented to the Senate by the same M. Valerius Messala Corvinus who had defended him before Antony a year earlier at Daphne. (4) The Senate rightly saw Parthia as the main issue and Antigonus's acceptance of the crown from the Parthians as indicative of his enemy status (*Ant.* 14.385; cf. Plutarch, *Antony* 33–52, who gives close attention to the Parthian dimensions), as a result of which the Senate determined to get rid of Antigonus. (5) Though it is absent from the accounts, some may have concluded that Hyrcanus could be abandoned, because Herod was now a better man for the job.

While Herod's abilities played a part, Antigonus's pact with the

Parthians was partly—or even mostly—responsible for Herod's elevation. Antigonos had strong support from among his people, but he had bad political instincts and received bad advice. His brother's and his father's resistance to Rome tainted him, and he compounded his difficulties by conspiring with Parthia, Rome's rival, despite having earlier been at the side of Caesar. Had Antigonos avoided entanglements with Parthia and remained on the Caesarian side, Judean history might have been very different. In retrospect it is apparent that Herod's most brilliant decision was to oppose Parthia vigorously: "the Parthian invasion was in reality a stroke of luck for Herod, for it enabled him to pose . . . as a champion of Rome who had lost his all" (Jones 1967, 43). Some (e.g. Grant 1971, 50–2) undervalue the Parthian element.

So Herod was appointed king; he had been tried in the fires of eastern politics and not been found wanting by his political mentors.

King of Judea

Josephus's vivid picture of Herod emerging from the Senate House with Octavian and Antony on either arm, strolling to the Capitol with consuls and magistrates to offer sacrifice and to lay up the decree just made, is charming and may even be accurate. From there the group went to Antony's house for a banquet (*War* 1.285; *Ant.* 14.388–9).

To his generalizing summary (*Ant.* 14.386–7) Josephus adds three explanations: (1) Herod had not come to Rome hoping to be named king, since the usual Roman custom was to grant it only to members of the existing ruling family. (2) He intended to propose as king Mariamme's brother, Aristobulus III, who was fourteen or fifteen years of age. (3) Antony rammed these decisions through in seven days, after which Herod left Italy. What is the truth of these additional statements?

Regarding Josephus's first comment, Herod probably did not expect the Senate to confer the crown on him; Josephus's earlier mention of Cassius's intention is not especially believable (*War* 1.225; *Ant.* 14.280), and even if correct, there is little reason to suppose that Herod thought Antony and the Senate would approve Cassius's notion to appoint him king. The most he could have hoped for was an enhanced role in Judea, either similar to his father's position or as regent until Aristobulus III could govern on his own.

Regarding the second comment, Herod's betrothal to Mariamme would have included the tacit expectation that Herod would support Aristobulus as ethnarch or king once Hyrcanus was gone. Hyrcanus, a

disfigured captive in Parthia, was unable to carry out the office of king or high priest and was as good as gone. Now was the time to get Aristobulus appointed king, for Herod himself would be—as he well realized—in an unassailable position. Who knew how the winds might blow to give him more power during the years he would be regent? Josephus, therefore, is likely correct: the same honor system that bound Herod to Mariamme and Aristobulus—the two remaining Hasmoneans—prevented Herod from imagining he could usurp kingship.

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As for Josephus's third comment on the length of his stay, Herod's immediate goal was to throw Parthia and Antigonus out of Judea, and to seek Rome's assistance. He had left his family with a small guard at Masada, which Antigonus was besieging, with Joseph, Herod's younger brother, in charge. At the same time, Ventidius led a successful counter-offensive against the Parthians, but he had done nothing to relieve Joseph and the family in Masada (*War* 1.286–9; *Ant.* 14.390–3). Now that Herod himself had been named king, it was essential for him to return to Judea, see to his family's safety, establish his new position, and occupy Jerusalem. Herod showed speed, determination, and decisiveness, making the return trip in winter. Josephus may be correct about the seven-day stay in Rome.

What was Herod's reaction to the turn of events in Rome? At thirty-two or thirty-three years of age he had seen Rome, appeared before the Senate, been appointed king of Judea, become friendly with Rome's leaders, gained a military reputation of some substance, been appointed by Roman governors to assist with the neighboring province, been noticed favorably by the queen of Egypt, and fought off attempts by the elite of Jerusalem to remove him. On the personal side, he had fathered a potential successor—Doris had borne Antipater in about 45 BCE—and was now betrothed to the last Hasmonean princess, Mariamme. He had prevailed over a wide variety of challenges and difficulties: the future was full of promise.

Still, there were clouds on the horizon, not least that Rome's eastern policy was in disarray: a rival occupied Judea's throne, Parthia controlled Judea, some of Jerusalem's leading citizens opposed Herod, Malichus of Nabatea (a kinsman) was duplicitous, and Lysanias of Chalcis (a relation by marriage) was allied with Antigonus. More challenging for Herod personally, his relations with Hyrcanus, Aristobulus III, and Mariamme would have suffered a serious reverse when he returned as king, a triumph they all would have resented. The

kingdom needed rebuilding since the Parthians had plundered it. Judea's economy must have been in terrible shape. For example, Antigonus's bronze coins had a copper content of 68 percent, whereas earlier Hasmonean coins had averaged 82 percent (Meshorer 1967, 60; silver coins would have provided a better basis for comment, but there were no Hasmonean or Herodian silver coins).

The first day of Herod's reign began, in Roman eyes and no doubt in Herod's eyes, sometime late in 40 BCE, dated by Josephus to the 184th Olympiad (though that Olympiad ended in July 40 BCE),⁵ when Gnaeus Domitius Calvinus and Gaius Asinius Pollio were consuls.⁶

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Notes

- ¹ In Cappadocia Pompey made a personal loan of 40 million sesterces to Ariobarzanes, an indication of his wealth and his networks of clients. On his finances, see Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 6.1 (letter 115), Laodicea, 50 BCE.
- ² *Ant.* 14 notes several of Josephus's sources: Nicolas (14.9); Strabo (14.35; 14.111); Strabo, Nicolas, and Titus Livius (14.68); Nicolas and Strabo (14.104); Strabo following Asinius Pollio (14.138); various decrees (14.145–55; 188–264).
- ³ We use this spelling to distinguish him from Malichus, Nabatean king.
- ⁴ Cleopatra's charms included skill in languages; she needed no interpreter with Ethiopians, Troglodytes, Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Medes, or Parthians (Plutarch, *Antony* 27).
- ⁵ For dating systems, see the Introduction.
- ⁶ Pollio's dates (76 BCE–4 CE) are almost identical to Herod's dates. He supported Caesar and Antony, was consul in 40 BCE and a successful military figure who built the first library in Rome from his plunder. He retired and became a significant literary figure, writing a history of the civil wars in seventeen books (lost) used by Plutarch, Appian, Strabo, and possibly Josephus. Herod's sons lived with him while getting their education in Rome. Calvinus (?–ca 31 BCE) is less interesting and less attractive.

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4 From Rome to Rhodes (40–30 BCE)

Up to Jerusalem: the first season's campaign

When Herod landed in Ptolemais in early 39 BCE, Ventidius was rolling back the Parthians. Herod was in a stronger position than a few months earlier, with Antony waking from his military slumbers. By contrast, Antigonus's position as an ally of the Parthians was extremely tenuous, but he tried to take advantage of the large degree of autonomy vested in Roman generals and their financial cupidity to improve his position. Parthia under Pacorus and Labienus, both of whom would soon be dead, was in retreat and Antigonus was on a limb that was about to be sawn off.

Herod's first challenge was the safety of his family members holding out in Masada. Ptolemais (Acco) was the only harbor with easy access to his territory; it had not been a part of Judea, but it was a customary entry point to the land. From Ptolemais Galilee was open, and this was territory Herod had controlled since 47 BCE. Once there he raised an army: some of his own men were loyal and available, others hitched themselves to Herod's rising fortunes, and numbers of non-Jews gathered to his standard. This army, "a not inconsiderable force of both foreigners and his countrymen" (*Ant.* 14.394; *War* 1.290), would have taken time to muster; in the meantime, Antony, perhaps concerned about Ventidius and Silo's¹ noncooperation, sent Dellius as his personal representative to assist Herod. Dellius was only partly successful, for when Ventidius and Silo had an opportunity to rescue Herod's family after reaching Jerusalem with a small troop, they chose instead to waste time extorting substantial sums from Antigonus (*War* 1.288–9; *Ant.* 14.392–3).

Josephus has not integrated Ventidius and Silo well into the narrative: they were in Jerusalem before Herod landed extorting money from

Antigonus, then Dellius won their cooperation, but in 39, however, Ventidius was still dealing with Labienus, and his march through Syria must have come only after Herod had landed. Thus even after Dellius was active on Herod's behalf, following Antony's orders, Ventidius was still guilty of double-dealing (Debevoise 1938, 114–16; Schürer 1973–87, 1:282–3).

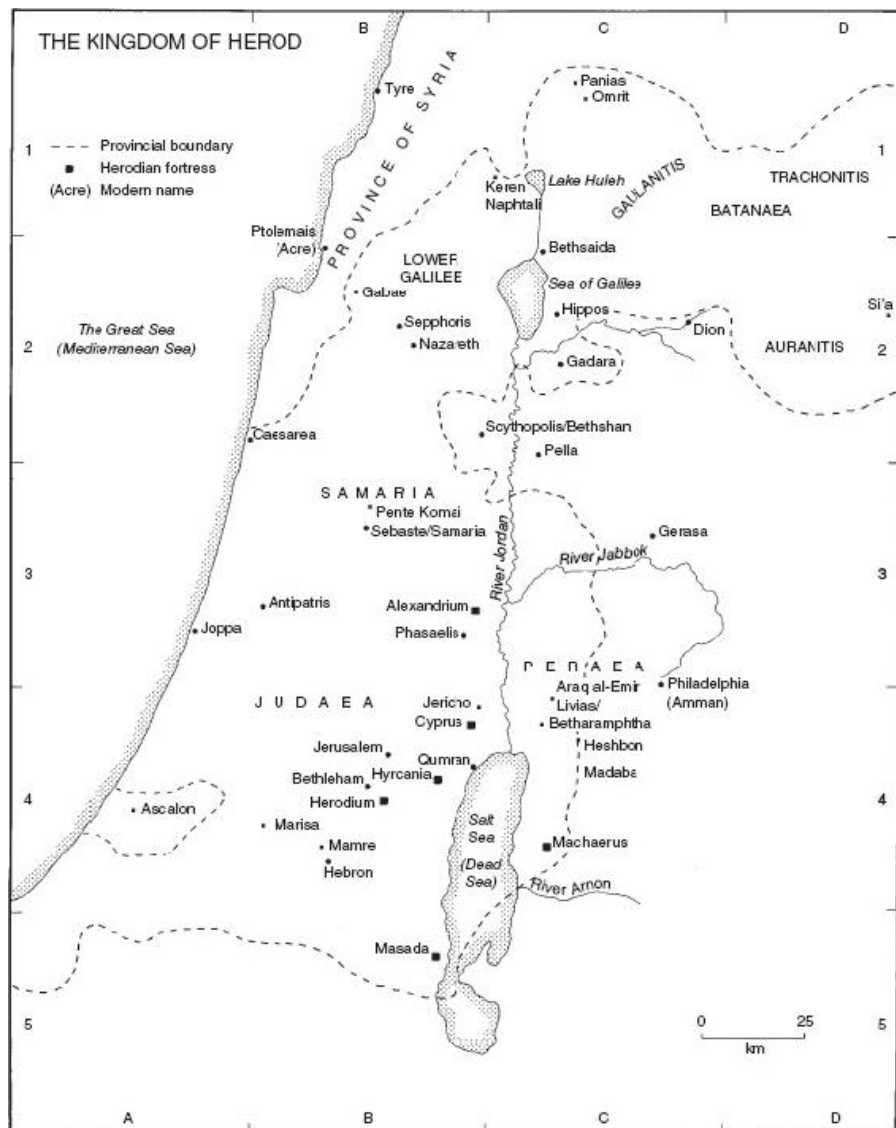
In this first summer (39 BCE) of his reign Herod concentrated on Galilee, while Ventidius put down local urban resistance in unspecified locations and Silo enjoyed Antigonus's hospitality in Jerusalem. Herod's Galilean campaign was successful; all but a few militants, says Josephus rather optimistically, came to Herod's side. Since his base in his old territory was reasonably secure, he could turn to Masada and the relief of his family. The most natural route from Galilee to Masada was down the Rift Valley—it was direct, straightforward, and well traveled—but it had been heavily protected by the Hasmoneans with fortresses: Agrippina, Alexandreion, Docus, Threx, Hyrcania, and Macherus. Soldiers loyal to Antigonus occupied all the strongpoints, so Herod took the Via Maris along the coast, which had the advantage of mostly neutral districts, better roads, and Idumean reinforcements who might join him along the way. More to the point, Jerusalem was easily reached if military action was feasible. Herod's main obstacle was Joppa (Yafo), the port left to Judea in the Pompeian and Gabinian settlements of 63 and 55 BCE (*War* 1.292; *Ant.* 14.396). As Herod approached Joppa, Silo joined him from Jerusalem, though Herod had to rescue him from a pursuing Jewish force. Together they took Joppa (see [Map 4.1](#)).

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With this success many more “country-folk” joined Herod (*War* 1.293; *Ant.* 14.398), enlarging his army considerably. Some reinforcements were Idumeans acting “out of friendship with his father,” some joined “because of his reputation,” some “for benefits received,” but most “because of the hopes which they placed in him.” These were additions to “all the Galilee” who had already joined Herod (*War* 1.292; *Ant.* 14.396). He moved south, bypassing Jerusalem and keeping as much as possible in Idumea, then headed east to relieve successfully the siege of Masada, rescuing his family. On the way back he took Oresa (Khirbet Khoreisa, south of Hebron; Abel 1938, 2.350; Aharoni & Avi-Yonah 1993, 22; Eshel/Richardson forthcoming), then marched north to Jerusalem where he was rejoined by Silo. The show of force at Oresa attracted many from Jerusalem to come over to his side (*War* 1.294; *Ant.* 14.399–400). Taking up a position on the west side of the city, he proclaimed his good intentions and declared a general amnesty that

included his most vigorous enemies. Antigonos issued a counter-proclamation (*Ant.* 14.403–4; contrast *War* 1.296), stating that even if he himself were deposed the kingship should go to someone of the royal family. According to Josephus, Antigonos said there were other suitable family candidates who “were priests,” referring perhaps to Aristobulus III, his nephew, implying that Antigonos staked his family’s claim on a linkage between priesthood and kingship. In Antigonos’s view, Herod was a commoner, an Idumean, and a half-Jew ([Chapter 12](#)).

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Map 4.1 Map of the Kingdom of Herod: through significant additions to his territory by Augustus, Herod's kingdom ultimately extended almost to the extent of David and Solomon's kingdom, including Perea to the east of the Jordan River and some Decapolis cities, as well as Gaulanitis, Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis, east of Hulis and the Sea of Galilee.

Winter was approaching (39/38 BCE), and Silo, showing a combination of practical concern and venality, urged his troops to demand food, money, and winter quarters. Herod tried to prevent them going to winter quarters, claiming the authority of Antony, Octavian, and the Senate. He foraged for food while supporters in Samaritis brought supplies to Jericho, from which Herod was intending to maintain the siege, because of its much better winter weather. At the time he was encamped west of Jerusalem. But Antigonus's successes forced Herod to change his plans; rather than centering his forces on Jericho, he dismissed the Romans to winter quarters in Idumea, Galilee, and Samaritis, the latter of which had been added to his territory (Appian, *Civil Wars* 5.75). Herod's brother Joseph occupied other parts of Idumea with the remaining forces, "To prevent any insurrection in favour of Antigonus" (*War* 1.303). After leaving his family in Samaria Herod went to Galilee to mop up, while Antigonus bribed Silo (*War* 1.302; *Ant.* 14.412) to quarter some of his troops in Lydda (Lod) to weaken Herod's position; perhaps he also wanted to show Antony how congenial he was.

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Failing to take Jerusalem must have been a cruel disappointment; both right and might had been on his side. Antigonus was vulnerable, though Parthia might still return to reinforce him (*War* 1.289; *Ant.* 14.393). Without reinforcements, and given Herod's Roman allies, Antigonus's forces were barely strong enough to sally from the walls but not sufficient to attack Herod directly. Breaking off the siege was a bitter decision for Herod, necessitated mainly by the double game Silo was playing, now with Antigonus, now with Herod. "And so the Romans put aside their arms and lived on the fat of the land" (*Ant.* 14.412).

It was a hard winter, however. In a heavy snowstorm Herod pushed on to Sepphoris (Zippori; Meyers, Netzer, & Meyers 1992; Reed 2002; Aviam/Richardson 2001, 193–5), only to find that Antigonus's soldiers had abandoned it, though it was fully provisioned. Instead, Herod

proceeded inconclusively against “brigands” occupying caves at Arbela (*War* 1.304–7; *Ant.* 14.413–17; [Chapter 11](#); see [Figure 3.1](#)).

Herod finally allowed his soldiers to take winter quarters after paying them about half a year’s wages, 150 denarii. Silo’s troops fared less well, for Antigonos cut off Silo’s supply of food and ordered the nearby inhabitants to move to the hills with all their supplies. To relieve the Romans’ distress, Herod sent his youngest brother Pheroras to obtain food for Silo (*Ant.* 14.418–19; *War* 1.308). Pheroras also used the winter to refortify Alexandreion, which had been abandoned and destroyed by Antigonos’s soldiers.

Meanwhile Antony was still far from the action and wintering in Athens with his wife, who was hoping for reconciliation after the birth of a daughter; on top of family tensions Antony was faced with tension between Octavian and himself (Plutarch, *Antony* 33). He needed to rouse himself. In late 39 BCE Ventidius defeated the Parthians and killed Labienus, the treasonous Roman (Cassius Dio, 48.24–6, 39–40; Schalit 1969, 759–61). As Ventidius reoccupied Syria, he anticipated a renewed Parthian campaign in the spring of 38 BCE, so he sent for Silo and Herod to join him after completing their efforts against Antigonos (*War* 1.309; *Ant.* 14.420). Wanting to be rid of Silo, Herod sent him off to join Ventidius’s successful campaign; Pacorus was killed in the battle of Gindarus (June 9, 38), northeast of Antioch-on-the-Orontes (*War* 1.317; *Ant.* 14.434; Plutarch, *Antony* 34; Sullivan 1990, 309–13).

Before joining Ventidius, Herod needed to eliminate the brigands in the Arbela caves (*War* 1.309–13; *Ant.* 14.421–30). This famous incident can still be seen in the mind’s eye when standing above the cliffs. Herod combined ruthless efficiency and brilliant strategy, lowering soldiers in cages from above rather than attacking from below. Thinking the Galilean troubles were over, Herod and his army expected to face Antigonos in Samaritis for a decisive engagement. But the commander Herod left behind in Galilee was overwhelmed by an uncoordinated combination of other brigands, who had fled to the Huleh marshes, and tag-ends of Antigonos’s soldiers, who had fled to fortified places, perhaps to Keren Naftali (Aviam 1997). So Herod again broke off his main campaign against Antigonos to eliminate his opponents in Galilee, after which he fined the cities that had been sympathetic to their plight. Many of these opponents appear to be “social brigands,” socially and economically disadvantaged Galileans who had lost lands and livelihood ([Chapter 11](#); Edwards & Richardson 2002), which coheres with the urban support they received (see *War* 1.314–16; *Ant.* 14.431–3).

Up to Jerusalem: the second season's campaign

Following his victory over Pacorus (summer 38 BCE), Ventidius sent Machaeras with two legions and 1,000 cavalry to assist Herod (*War* 1.317; *Ant.* 14.434), a combined force that should have been able to overcome Antigonus quickly. But Machaeras went on his own to Jerusalem after rejecting a bribe offered by Antigonus. In one account, Josephus implausibly says Herod offered more money (*War* 1.317–18; *Ant.* 14.435 does not mention this), for it seems odd that Herod would bribe Machaeras when Antony explicitly ordered Machaeras to join Herod (Schalit 1969, 93–4, and nn.136, 137). Antigonus attacked Machaeras, who was forced to rejoin Herod at Emmaus (to which Herod had advanced); on the way Machaeras angrily killed all Jews he met, including Herod's supporters, who are referred to as "Herodians" (*hoi Herōdeiōn* in *War* 1.319); "those of Herod" (*tous ta Hērōdou* in *War* 1.326 and *Ant.* 14.450; [Chapter 11](#)). Herod stormed off to complain to Antony, leaving his brother Joseph in charge. Though Machaeras pursued him and managed to calm him, Herod continued to Samosata (Samsat) on the Upper Euphrates where Antony was engaging the Parthians. Herod had several reasons to see Antony: to complain of Machaeras, to support Antony's campaign, and to "display his courage" (*War* 1.321). Herod's leadership and bravery, as a result of which he was greeted as "savior and protector," are underscored in a highly laudatory section in *Ant.* 14.440–4. Though he exaggeratedly praises Herod, Josephus claims that Herod contributed significantly to Antony's war effort. Antony left for Egypt, putting Sossius in charge of Syria (Plutarch, *Antony* 34); faithful to Antony's instructions, Sossius sent two legions ahead with Herod into Judea and followed later himself.

This Parthian campaign occupied Herod's summer, but in his absence disaster had struck in Judea. Joseph, Herod's inexperienced younger brother, had exceeded Herod's orders, marching with raw Roman soldiers from Galilee to Jericho to gather grain. Antigonus ambushed Joseph's forces, cutting them to pieces, and decapitated Joseph. This left Galilee leaderless (Phasaël was dead and Pheroras elsewhere), which triggered a peasant revolt against the nobility, in which some of Herod's supporters were drowned in the Sea of Galilee. Parts of Idumea (*War* 1.326) or Judea (*Ant.* 14.450) also revolted against Herod, including Gittha (an unidentified village, perhaps in the borderland between).

Herod learned of these serious reverses as he paused in Daphne (*War* 1.328; *Ant.* 14.451), so he marched south through Lebanon, where he was reinforced by a legion from Sossius and 800 “mountaineers” (perhaps Itureans), though there is no mention of Lysanias, Antigonus’s ally, who held a substantial portion of the Beka’a Valley. Herod met the enemy near an unnamed fortress in Galilee. There are few Galilean fortresses, and the location of this one is not specified, but the most plausible site is the Hellenistic-period fortress of Keren Naftali, overlooking the Huleh basin (Aviam 1997), which provides early evidence of Herod’s use of siege strategy in Judea. After waiting out a heavy storm (early winter, 38–37 BCE), Herod was joined by Sossius’s second legion. Antigonus’s frightened forces evacuated the fortress without a fight (*War* 1.328–30; *Ant.* 14.451–3), permitting Herod to hurry to Jericho to wreak vengeance. He had a providential escape—Josephus says this omen showed that Herod was a favorite of heaven (*War* 1.331; *Ant.* 14.455)—after a big dinner party, when a roof collapsed and nearly killed him. Although he tried to engage the enemy the next day in the fortresses guarding Jericho (Docus?), they withdrew with Herod in pursuit as far as Isana, 20 miles north of Jerusalem (correctly in *Ant.* 14.450; Schalit 1969, 96, n.141). Having put himself between Jerusalem and a force under Pappus, who had sallied into Samaritis to oppose Machaeras, Herod laid waste several towns in the region, prompting new recruits, many opposed to Antigonus, some attracted by Herod’s success, and some merely wanting change (*War* 1.335). Herod would have marched straightaway on Jerusalem but for another severe storm. Josephus tells dramatically of another near miraculous escape when Herod, while almost alone at bath, surprised some fully armed enemy soldiers who had survived the battle (*War* 1.340–1; *Ant.* 14.462–4).

A hard winter’s campaign was almost over. Herod had fought his way a second time up to Jerusalem. By cutting the main road between Jerusalem and Samaria, he had forced Pappus to engage him in a location of Herod’s own choosing or be stranded between his and Machaeras’s forces in Samaritis. Antigonus blundered by making a feint into Samaritis; Herod had outwitted him, destroyed part of the enemy forces, and killed an experienced general.

Herod revenged his brother Joseph’s death by sending the head of Pappus to Pheroras, to whom Pappus had sent Joseph’s head. Having fought through most of the winter, Herod arrived at Jerusalem to besiege his capital in spring 37 BCE.

The battle for Jerusalem

Herod, like Pompey a generation earlier, approached the city from the north (*Ant.* 14.60; *War* 1.145), where the temple was protected by a fosse cut into the bedrock, continuous with a small transverse valley that ran into the Kidron Valley on the east. Above the fosse was the Baris—the Hasmonean fortress referred to often in the literature—on higher ground than the temple and outside the walls (Ritmeyer 2015). This was the natural point of attack. In Roman fashion, Herod built earthen siege walls with towers at intervals and distributed his army around the whole city, as he had done earlier at Keren Naphtali.

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In the midst of these preparations, probably in March, Herod went to Samaria to marry Mariamme, who was waiting there with other members of the family. Josephus's interpretation of this event, often accepted by scholars, is that Herod was contemptuous of his enemy (*War* 1.344), but this is unconvincing. While Herod may have expected victory soon, the siege preparations were time-consuming and could be carried out by subordinates more experienced than he at this aspect of warfare. An attack would not be ordered until all was prepared. A more convincing explanation of the Samaria trip is that Mariamme was now between fifteen and seventeen years of age, a common age of marriage in the Mediterranean world (Ilan 2006, 65–9, 144; see [Chapter 12](#)), so she could replace Doris, whom Herod had divorced five years earlier (the claim in *War* 1.431–2 that he dismissed Doris and his son Antipater when he took the throne must be incorrect). Herod and Mariamme's betrothal agreement may have proposed a date for marriage, so, anticipating a lengthy siege, Herod seized the opportunity to celebrate his nuptials.

The kingdom was almost within grasp as Sossius's promised reinforcements showed up on Herod's return from Samaria. The army now had two generals, eleven divisions of foot soldiers, 6,000 cavalry, and an unspecified number of Syrian auxiliaries (*War* 1.345–46; *Ant.* 14.468–9). Josephus adds in an aside (*Ant.* 14.469) that Antigonus had been declared an enemy of Rome, eliminating the possibility of Roman commanders self-interestedly dealing with Antigonus.

Though they differ in details, *War* and *Antiquities* both convey vividly the atmosphere and the course of the attack: the zeal and bitterness of the defenders, anxiety over the temple, and prophetic expectations of deliverance. Herod pressed the siege, but the defenders countered by tunneling under his siege works and harassing Herod's army (*War* 1.347–51; *Ant.* 14.470–5). After six weeks, a handpicked group of

soldiers scaled the walls and broke into the temple precinct, at which time some of the stoas were burnt. Two weeks later they broke through the wall between the temple and the lower city (City of David). The last section of the city to be taken was the Upper City (Western Hill), though some priests were holed up in the Inner Court of the temple maintaining daily sacrifice (*Ant.* 14.476–9; *War* 1.352).

The decisive events may have occurred in mid-37 or alternatively in early 36 BCE. The uncertainty is related to questions of famine and a sabbatical year (*Ant.* 14.475; see Introduction; Marcus, note (a), ad loc.). While we do not follow Finegan in preferring the year of 38/37 BCE (Finegan 1998, # 227) as a sabbatical year, when he concludes that Jerusalem was not taken until 36 BCE (Finegan, 116–26; ## 224–31), a date that Mahieu also supports (2012, 60–99), we are strongly inclined to accept that date. There is no agreement on the month the siege concluded: March (Mahieu 2012); July (Jones 1967, 48); August (Schalit 1969, Anh. IX, 764–8); August or September (Grant 1971, 59); uncertain (Marcus, note (a) at *Ant.* 14.475 and note (d) at 14.480).

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In a sabbatical year the land lies fallow, so the available food for that year depends upon the crop of the preceding year. The most critical situation arises if there were a combination of a sabbatical year and a drought at about the same time; if the year before, there would be insufficient food during the sabbatical year; if the year after, there may be insufficient grain to sow the following year's crop. Josephus is unspecific in both *Ant.* 14.475 and 15.7; for example, in 14.475 he says, "they were distressed by famine and the lack of necessities, for a sabbatical year happened to fall at that time." Mahieu implies that it was a deliberate decision to time the siege to correspond with a sabbatical year (2012, 62), but a siege is more likely to be determined by military considerations than by coincidence with a sabbatical year.

Josephus attempts precision in his comments, though his calculations do not achieve it. He dates the event twenty-seven years after Pompey's entry into Jerusalem (37 BCE or 36 BCE, depending on inclusive or exclusive dating); he gives the consuls as Marcus Agrippa and Caninius Gallus (that consular year was 37 BCE), in the 185th Olympiad (ended June 30, 37 BCE; see 14.487). Further, Josephus suggests the city fell on the fast day (*nēsteia*, the Day of Atonement; October 3 in 37 BCE); yet it was in the third month (implying the third month of the Olympiad, though that is manifestly impossible); Schürer argues (1973–87, 1.284–6, n.11) that it was probably the third month of the engagement and the

fifth month of the siege. One conclusion is that the siege operations allowed a good length of time for Herod to celebrate his marriage in Samaria in 37 BCE and also for Sossius to reach Jerusalem from Syria. Whether the siege operations were completed in 37 or early 36 BCE is difficult to say. Josephus's calculations suggest 37, but chronological experts propose 36 BCE.

Antigonus held out in the Baris; when he emerged he ignored Herod and threw himself at Sossius's feet, who, after making a bad pun about "Antigone," treated Antigonus like an ordinary prisoner and put him in chains. For his part, Herod not only prevented the troops from seizing their usual booty after a siege but also stopped "his foreign allies" from seeing inside the sanctuary (*War* 1.354–5; *Ant.* 14.482–4). He paid the soldiers from his own pocket, giving them their wages and something extra for the booty they failed to get. After donating a golden crown to the temple (*War* 1.357; *Ant.* 14.488), Sossius took Antigonus to Antony at Antioch where he was executed. His execution, according to *Ant.* 14.489–90, took place because Herod bribed Antony, fearing that if Antigonus were given a hearing before the Senate he would argue for his children taking precedence over Herod. The sources differ on the method of execution (Cassius Dio 49.22; Plutarch, *Antony* 36; Strabo, quoted in *Ant.* 15.9; *War* 1.357), suggesting it was in an un-Roman way, but what was unusual was carrying out the sentence without a decision of the Senate, though the Senate had already declared Antigonus an enemy of Rome. Sossius was given the title Imperator and later celebrated a triumph in Rome (September 3, 34) for his Judean victory (*PIR* 1 S 556). Sossius minted a bronze coin at Zacynthus in the Peloponnesus, commemorating Judea's capture (Grant 1971, 59); he was consul in 32 BCE, but after verbally attacking Octavian in the Senate he fled to Antony with other senators, commanding Antony's left wing at Actium. Octavian pardoned Sossius following Antony's defeat.

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Herod gained *de facto* power in 37/36 BCE, though he had been "king" since late 40 BCE. In *Antiquities* Josephus holds back from referring to Herod as king until *Ant.* 15.39 (anticipated in 14.469) when Aristobulus was appointed high priest, though in *War* he begins to refer to Herod as king during the incident in the bath at Isana (1.341), a story that has a first-person ring to it (see *War* 1.349, 352, 354, 358, possibly from Herod's *Memoirs*). With the Hasmoneans effectively finished, Herod was firmly ensconced as king. Josephus's concluding summary of Book 14 (*Ant.* 14.490–1) makes the transition by underscoring the Hasmoneans' accomplishments and their weak point: it was a splendid

house and occupied priestly offices but it was marred by internal strife.

The new monarch spent his first days in Jerusalem doling out rewards and punishments: he honored his own supporters who had espoused his cause while he was still a commoner and executed forty-five of Antigonius's supporters and (*War* 1.358; *Ant.* 15.1–7). Some of the money and valuables gained from these opponents went to Antony. Herod especially favored Pollion and Samaias, Pharisees, one of whom had—as early as 47 BCE—predicted Herod's success and his eventual persecution of the elite (Schalit 1969, Anh. X, 768–71; [Chapters 2 and 11](#)).

Any hope for continuing Hasmonean power lay in Hyrcanus II, Herod's old ally and patron (*Ant.* 15.11–17),² who had been held by the Parthians since his capture and disfigurement in 40 BCE. The new king of Parthia, Phraates IV (38–2 BCE), allowed Hyrcanus to live with the large Jewish community in Babylon where he received high honor because of his lineage and previous position as high priest and ethnarch (Sullivan 1990, 314–18). Anticipating repayment of favors he had done Herod, Hyrcanus was anxious to return to Judea now that Herod was installed in Jerusalem. His friends, however, urged him to stay in Babylon, arguing that his mutilation prevented his being high priest and that Herod was unlikely to be well disposed to him. But Herod wrote and promised a virtual share of the kingship, linked to his recent marriage to Hyrcanus's granddaughter Mariamme (*War* 1.434). Herod's envoy Saramalla, described as the wealthiest man in all Syria, took gifts to Phraates to get his cooperation. (This same Saramalla had advised Hyrcanus and Phasael to flee in 40 BCE because of the plans of Pacorus, Barzaphranes, and Antigonius to kill them.) Josephus then jumps ahead of his story, revealing that Herod invited Hyrcanus to return only because he intended to be rid of him (*Ant.* 15.18–20).

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[Alexandra, Cleopatra, and the death of Aristobulus III](#)

Hyrcanus II left Parthia with Phraates' blessing and with financial help from the Jewish community; he returned to Jerusalem with full honors. The few remaining Hasmoneans were now reunited within Herod's household: Hyrcanus, his daughter Alexandra, his granddaughter Mariamme, his grandson Aristobulus III, and possibly by this time Alexander, his first great-grandson by Herod and Mariamme. Alexandra had been widowed when her husband, Alexander, was executed (ca. 49

BCE; *War* 1.185). By now she had been a widow for well over a decade, a long period to fail to remarry, comparable to Herod's mother's (presumed) failure to remarry (Ilan 2006, 149–50).

If Hyrcanus were unable to be high priest because he was disfigured, then Aristobulus III—the nearest male relative of a previous high priest and Mariamme's younger brother—should be, or so Alexandra argued, ignoring his youth. Aristobulus was probably about seventeen when appointed high priest (*Ant.* 15.29, 51, 56). The minimum age for a high priest is unclear, but no contemporary evidence hints at a priest, let alone a high priest, under twenty (Schalit 1969, 101–2, esp. n.18; see also Schürer 1973–87, 2.243, nn.23–4; Sanders 1992, 77–91, 170–91). It may be that there were good reasons to question the wisdom of Aristobulus's appointment as high priest and to select someone else.

Herod appointed Hananel, accordingly, because of Aristobulus's youth (*paidion*; *Ant.* 15.34). Hananel was a friend and a member of a high priestly family from Babylon (in *Ant.* 15.40; 15.21–23, “a rather undistinguished priest from Babylon”). Since Herod was unlikely to have appointed someone without Hyrcanus's agreement, and since Hyrcanus knew the Babylonian community intimately, the appointment of Hananel, overlooking Aristobulus and other Judean candidates, would have had at least the twin rationales of maturity and familiarity, so far as Hyrcanus was concerned.

Alexandra took exaggerated offense at Herod's decision; she asked Cleopatra—a close friend—to request the high priesthood for Aristobulus from Antony, a request Antony ignored (*Ant.* 15.23–4). Dellius, who had assisted Herod earlier, advised Alexandra to win Antony's support by putting portraits of Mariamme and Aristobulus—Mariamme was a couple of years older than Aristobulus but both were “beautiful *children*” (15.25)—before Antony as potential objects for sexual conquest. Josephus's account is almost farcical, since Dellius was himself Antony's lover (Cassius Dio 49.39). Despite his notorious sexual reputation, Antony was too afraid of Cleopatra to act. Herod acted more or less honorably, for, knowing fully Antony's intentions, he wrote that it was unwise to send Aristobulus, spuriously reasoning that revolution might break out at Aristobulus's absence because people hoped he would overturn the government (of Herod; *Ant.* 15.25–30)! Behind Josephus's account of Herod's lame excuse to Antony was Herod's concern that Aristobulus had become a focus for popular aspirations to overturn him.

These early days reveal an increasingly troublesome pattern of family rivalries. (1) Herod accused Alexandra (with Cleopatra) of plotting against him. (2) The honor—and dishonor—of individual family members was critically important, while family relationships were strained (see also *Ant.* 15.44). (3) Alexandra backed down almost penitently, satisfied with Herod's actions, denying designs on royal power (of which no hint has yet been given). (4) Josephus portrays Alexandra as a scheming “royal,” while Herod is more sinned against than sinning. (5) When matters were resolved everyone got something; the key was Aristobulus III got the high priesthood, though he was a youth. When Herod deposed Hananel he no doubt claimed Hananel's appointment was temporary until Aristobulus could step in. But was Hananel from a high priestly family, equivalent in status and legitimacy to the Hasmoneans? Was Aristobulus's appointment valid given his youth? Was it acceptable to depose a high priest and replace him? Whatever the answers, the decision was taken: Alexandra got increased honor from her son's new role; Mariamme got the satisfaction of her brother's appointment; and Herod got family peace, even if only temporarily (*Ant.* 15.31–41, cf. 42).

The various events disclose dimly a fear of female takeover, a worry that was not so farfetched with subsequent events reinforcing the idea. Remember that Alexandra's grandmother, Alexandra Salome, had occupied the throne successfully for nine years and her friend Cleopatra VII currently held Egypt's throne. Alexandra, the daughter of Hyrcanus II, might logically aspire to his throne as widow of Alexander and daughter-in-law of Aristobulus II. It is not unreasonable to argue that this was a Hellenistic influence on the Hasmonean family who were simply following a model “of absolute monarchy in all its aspects,” as they were doing in other respects (Ilan 2006, 174–5).

The familial reconciliation was quite superficial. Herod feared Alexandra and confined her to her palace under surveillance; from there she wrote to Cleopatra, and Cleopatra's reply urged Alexandra to come to Egypt with Aristobulus. The two fled Jerusalem hidden in coffins (“a literary feature”; Schalit 1969, 110, n.47). As they headed for Alexandria Herod, knowing of the plot, let them proceed, and caught them red-handed. He took no immediate action, though “he was determined at all costs . . . to get the youth out of the way” (*Ant.* 15.39). Josephus notes in passing Cleopatra's hatred of Herod, though a few years previously she had asked him to become one of her military commanders.

Herod could no longer ignore the threat, whether real or imagined, to his throne, especially after seeing Aristobulus's obvious popularity at

Tabernacles in 35 BCE. Once the festival was concluded the royal party left Jerusalem for the Hasmonean palace in Jericho, which Herod had allowed Alexandra to retain (*Ant.* 15.53). As the young people frolicked in the still visible swimming pool, Aristobulus was drowned at Herod's orders (*Ant.* 15.50–6; *War* 1.437). There was widespread mourning, but Alexandra's grief was intense, for Aristobulus's death threatened her plans to replace Herod. She held the grief, which almost undid her, to herself and plotted revenge while Herod made a show of emotion and laid on a lavish funeral (*Ant.* 15.57–61). As *Antiquities* implies, Herod's main antagonist was Alexandra, despite the view in *War* 1.436–7 that it was Mariamme, a picture that has become almost standard: that Herod was consumed by his love for Mariamme while she was consumed by her hatred of him, because of his execution of her grandfather Hyrcanus and his drowning of Aristobulus III.

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When Alexandra appealed again to Cleopatra, Cleopatra urged Antony, who was in Egypt anticipating his invasion of Armenia and Parthia, to demand that Herod answer charges of murder or conspiracy in Laodicea (Latakia) in Syria. This was a summons Herod could not refuse, though he feared Cleopatra's influence on Antony (*Ant.* 15.65). Leaving Joseph—his brother-in-law, not his uncle—in charge with instructions, perhaps, to kill Mariamme if he should not survive his meeting with Antony, Herod went off.³ As in a Shakespearean tragedy, Josephus allows readers to see trouble brewing in advance: Joseph revealed Herod's instructions to Mariamme, while Alexandra persuaded Joseph they should flee to Jerusalem, where a Roman legion was still stationed, whether assisting Herod or keeping him under Antony's thumb is debatable. Herod's foes started a rumor that Joseph had been tortured and executed. Alexandra's hopes for power were again dashed when a letter arrived from Herod stating that Antony had cleared him and showered him with honor by inviting him to dine with him and sit with him in judgment. To make matters worse for Alexandra, Antony rebuffed Cleopatra and told her not to meddle in others' affairs. He refused to give her Judea, although he did give her Coele-Syria, the coastal plain, and Jericho (see *Ant.* 15.96; Jones 1967, 49; Perowne 1956, 67–8).

It is not certain, though possible, that *Ant.* 15.79 and 92–5 are versions of the same incident. In 15.79 Cleopatra got Coele-Syria, perhaps Chalcis in the Beka'a valley (so Marcus); in 15.92 she passed through Syria and had Lysanias of Chalcis killed, at the same time asking for Arabia and Judea. She did not get all she wanted, only coastal

cities south of the Eleutherus River, mostly outside Herod's territory, one or perhaps two in Arabian territory. It seems likely there was only one transfer of land, not two, comprising two separate but contiguous tracts: Chalcis, now that Lysanias was dead, and several coastal cities, probably Ptolemais, Dor, Straton's Tower, Joppa, Azotus, Ashkelon, and Gaza. Plutarch says "Phoenicia, Coele Syria and a large part of Cilicia . . . and the region which produces balsam and the coastal strip of Arabia Nabatea which stretches down to the Red Sea" (Plutarch *Antony* 36). Augustus gave back much of this to Herod in 30 BCE. When Josephus says (*War* 1.440) that Cleopatra caused the deaths of both Lysanias and Malichus, king of Nabatea, he must be inaccurate, for Malichus (56–28 BCE) survived Mariamme's death.

Alexandra abandoned flight to the Romans after Herod's letter. But another sub-plot emerges when Herod's sister Salome told Herod about Alexandra's plans; Salome knew the details through her husband Joseph, who was in charge, along with Cypros. Salome accused her husband Joseph of adultery with Mariamme, a charge Mariamme vigorously denied. Mariamme was, in fact, accused of three offenses: adultery, sending her portrait to Antony, and exposing herself to an unnamed person "powerful enough to resort to violence." All these events happened prior to Herod's going to Laodicea. During this period, Herod "was paralyzed by his infatuation" with Mariamme (*War* 1.438). The result was that Herod and Mariamme fought, made up, fell out again, and were reconciled again, while about the same time Herod executed Joseph and had Alexandra confined under guard (*Ant.* 15.87). A similar account is given in *War* 1.441–4, though with a different ending; *Ant.* 15.218–21 makes Soemus, not Joseph, the protagonist ([Chapter 5](#)).

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Nabatean war

Antony acted as a despot able to dispose of lands and peoples as he wished:

Antony had bestowed tetrarchies and even the sovereignty of great peoples upon private individuals: he had deprived many rulers of their kingdoms, as for example Antigonus ... but nothing caused so much offence to his own countrymen as the shame of these honours conferred upon Cleopatra.

(Plutarch, *Antony* 36)

Romans resented his territorial gifts to Cleopatra, some of which

impinged on Herod's territorial integrity, requiring Herod to negotiate a leaseback arrangement of his own Jericho estates and (unspecified) parts of Arabia, at the substantial sum of 200 talents per year (equivalent to Herod's total income from Galilee and Perea in 4 BCE). In a complex deal Herod then sublet the territories back to Malichus (*Ant.* 15.107). Antony's gifts to Cleopatra offended his allies Herod and Malichus, and destabilized the economy of the region; Jericho's importance depended on the value of balsam sap—a headache and eyesight remedy—and palm wine, exported as far as Italy (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.763; Pliny, *NH* 12.111; cf. Schürer 1973–87, 1.298–300, n.36).

Herod may have been guilty of some sharp dealing in the Jericho leaseback arrangements (*War* 1.362; *Ant.* 15.96, 106–7). As the prime lessee of Jericho and parts of Nabatea he paid Cleopatra the yearly rent, then sublet Nabatean territory back to Malichus at a charge—if Josephus is accurate—of the same amount, getting back Jericho for nothing (*Ant.* 15.107). This interpretation, however, may be called into question a little later: Herod claimed that he and Malichus each paid 200 talents, with a proviso that if Malichus defaulted Herod was responsible for all 400 talents (*Ant.* 15.132); the annual rent was equivalent to the total income of Judea, Samaritis, and Idumea in 4 BCE. This sum would have broken Herod financially (Jones 1967, 50; Perowne 1956, 74–6). At first Malichus paid his share, but as Antony and Cleopatra's position weakened he stopped paying, and by 32/31 BCE relations were as strained between Malichus and Herod as they were between Antony and Octavian.

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After Cleopatra accompanied Antony to the Euphrates, sending him off on what would prove to be a successful campaign—especially its Armenian extension (Archelaus of Cappadocia received Lesser Armenia for his assistance)—she returned via Apamea, Damascus, and Judea. Herod accompanied her to the Egyptian border. According to Josephus's detailed account in *Antiquities* she tried to seduce him, for “she was by nature used to enjoying this kind of pleasure without disguise.” Josephus does not know if her motive was passion or a complicated trap and suggests Herod was equally unsure. But Herod was uninterested in Cleopatra; his attitude toward her had now changed. Josephus says he was considering whether to assassinate her, partly for revenge and partly to help Antony, even if Antony did not know he needed this kind of help. Because Cleopatra was the most powerful woman of her time and because Antony was still in love with her, Herod's friends advised him against this dangerous plan. So Herod simply slipped away from this

unlikely seduction and escorted Cleopatra to Pelusium, all the while courting her with gifts (*Ant.* 15.97–103; missing in the parallel, *War* 1.362–3).

Following the Parthian-Armenian campaign Antony and Octavian's pact began to fall apart (Plutarch, *Antony* 53–60), with both sides preparing for war (33/32 BCE). We have relatively poor information about the Levant in this period, though Judea certainly had internal tensions and external problems with Nabatea; *War* 1.364 refers to disturbances in Judea prior to Actium. Herod was not as successful as Josephus's sources claim, because only now did Herod capture the Hasmonean fortress of Hyrcania, held by Antigonus's sister (about whom we know nothing). Further, Herod was threatened with the defection of his brother-in-law, Costobar, who tried to defect to Cleopatra and take Idumea with him at about this time (*Ant.* 15.256–8).

When a final showdown loomed between Antony and Octavian, Herod was obligated to join Antony (*Ant.* 15.109). Antony, however, told Herod to deal first with Malichus, about whom Antony had heard from both Herod and Cleopatra. Cleopatra tried to play each side against the other, expecting to come out ahead whoever won the struggle (*War* 1.365; *Ant.* 15.110). She understandably favored the Nabatean king, for if Malichus—and Antony—won she would get Judea, Samaritis, and Galilee. If successful her territory would approximate the old Ptolemaic holdings, since she already controlled the coastal cities, Phoenicia, Chalcis (perhaps with other parts of Coele-Syria), and much of the Cilician coastlands, together with Cyprus. There may have been a grand design behind her strategy, though how much Herod discerned is not said. His first priority, in both his own mind and Antony's, was to deal with Malichus and Nabatea. Josephus has Herod claim in a speech (*Ant.* 15.131) that his friendship with Antony protected Nabateans from becoming slaves of Cleopatra: "Antony was careful not to take any measure that might seem suspect to us."

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After several feints, Herod grappled successfully with the Nabatean army at Dium (Tell Ashari) in Gaulanitis, a likelier location than Diospolis of *War* 1.366 and *Ant.* 15.111 (on Nabatean influence in the area, Millar 1993, 391–400, 408–14). Herod was well placed for another victory as he moved across Batanea into Auranitis, where he faced Nabatea again at Canatha (Qanawat). While preparing a military encampment in cautious Roman fashion his soldiers—perhaps junior officers (*War* 1.369)—urged him to attack right away. *War* 1.367 has

them, implausibly, take matters into their own hands by rushing the enemy. Though Herod was on the verge of success, Athenion, one of Cleopatra's generals who appeared neutral but actually favored the Nabateans, intervened with Canathan soldiers (*War* 1.367; *Ant.* 15.116). Perhaps Athenion served in the forces of one or other Decapolis city, since Cleopatra may have received some Decapolis cities as part of Coele-Syria. In any case, Athenion's intervention was an "undeclared war," according to Herod (*Ant.* 15.139), and Herod's anticipated victory was turned into a slaughter. Herod himself escaped to get reinforcements—too few and too late—so the most he was able to do was launch guerrilla raids against Malichus (*War* 1.369; *Ant.* 15.120); even that may be an exaggeration, since Josephus applies a favorite pejorative, *lēsteia* ("brigandage"), to Herod (*Ant.* 15.120).

Up to this point the portrayal of Herod's military prowess has been favorable: he was skilled, energetic, decisive, and a good commander. A summary in *War* 1.429–30 (no parallel in *Antiquities*) says he was an "irresistible" fighter, a skilled bowman and javelin thrower, blessed with a strong body, a distinguished horseman, and an energetic huntsman. He was near flawless in his actions against brigands (*lēstai*), he effectively assisted various Roman commanders including Antony, he took over his kingdom slowly but in a workmanlike—and then magnanimous—way. Now he faltered. He won the first engagement at Dium, lost the second at Canatha, and had to fall back on trifling border raids. Herod's major defeat by Malichus and Athenion is excused by Josephus (or his sources) as the fault of his soldiers' enthusiasm: "he rarely met with a reverse in war, and when he did, this was due not to his own fault, but either to treachery or to the recklessness of his troops" (*War* 1.429–30). He should have followed his own battle plan; instead he sued for peace (*War* 1.371; *Ant.* 15.124).

The year 31 BCE was a low point for Herod (*War* 1.370; *Ant.* 15.121). He was humiliated by the defeat at Canatha, about to lose his patron Antony, and troubled by a major earthquake (the spring 31 BCE earthquake preceded the showdown at Actium in the fall of 31) that caused substantial death, destruction, disruption, and loss of livestock. The Nabateans became bolder, killing Herod's peace envoys "contrary to the universal law of mankind" (*War* 1.378; *Ant.* 15.136) and invading Judea; Herod had to pull his forces back to Jerusalem and its environs. In a major speech (reported differently in *War* 1.373–9 and *Ant.* 15.127–46, showing Josephus's varied purposes and rhetoric) Herod roused his troops for renewed battle.

Having regrouped, mobilized fresh soldiers, and offered sacrifices, Herod turned on the attack again (*War* 1.380; *Ant.* 15.147). He crossed the Jordan near Jericho and marched toward Philadelphia (Amman), but paused to take a fortress targeted by the Nabateans at the same time. Which fortress is not stated, possibly Gedor or Araq al-Amir; Judea's army must have had the better of it, for they had water (perhaps the running supply at Araq al-Amir), and the Nabateans did not, implying this was late summer (31 BCE). Large numbers of Nabateans defected, but Herod did not follow up this victory; he withdrew to Jerusalem, satisfied with his revenge for his earlier crushing defeat. The result of these engagements was that Herod was appointed *prostatēs*, "protector" or "patron," of Nabatea (*War* 1.385; *Ant.* 15.159).

On September 2, 31 BCE Octavian was victorious over Antony at Actium; though Octavian pursued Cleopatra to Egypt, she avoided battle. Herod's victory over Malichus and Cleopatra may have looked somewhat comparable to Octavian's victory, though to pitch it in such a self-serving way played with the reality. As Antony's client, Herod was threatened by Octavian's victory, though Josephus turns things around by suggesting that Octavian could not think his victory complete as long as Herod was Antony's ally (*War* 1.386; cf. *Ant.* 15.161–3). Herod's attachment to Antony—his strength in the past decade—was now a liability.

The end of Hyrcanus II

Herod had to clarify his position with Octavian immediately. First, however, he decided on a risky and brutal expedient. Hyrcanus II, by now over seventy (not eighty-one as *Ant.* 15.178 says; probably about seventy-one) and no longer a threat, was the only surviving male Hasmonean (Schalit 1969, 131–41). Herod determined to remove this one obstacle before he made a bold bid for Octavian's confirmation.

There are two versions (*Ant.* 15.163–73, 174–8; summary in 179–82). The first and longer account derives, Josephus says, from Herod's *Memoirs*, which Josephus consulted for *Antiquities* but not for *War* (Grant 1971, 90–2, leans toward this version). Whether some of the preceding account is from the *Memoirs* is not said. The *Memoirs* claim that Alexandra, Hyrcanus's daughter, caused Hyrcanus's death. She pleaded with her father to write Malichus asking for asylum, to which Hyrcanus reluctantly agreed. He sent a letter by Dositheus—who was devoted to Hyrcanus and Alexandra (*Ant.* 15.169) and an enemy of Herod's because of Herod's execution of Joseph—asking for an escort from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea. Not only was Dositheus related to

Joseph, he was also related to some whom Antony had executed at Tyre. Despite a background that should have made him a trustworthy messenger for Hyrcanus, Dositheus took Hyrcanus's letter to Herod, who, after reading it, instructed him to take it to Malichus. When Malichus replied, agreeing with Hyrcanus's request, Herod took the correspondence to his council—again useful as in some other incidents—which sentenced Hyrcanus to death by strangling (*Ant.* 15.163–73, 176), presumably for treason.

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The second account, favorable to Hyrcanus, appears to be an intentionally alternative explanation: it presupposes some of the same details (letters, horses) and specifically undercuts charges of revolution, alleging that Hyrcanus's mild character was proof of his innocence (*Ant.* 15.174–8). In this explanation the correspondence was forged (Jones 1967, 58). In neither account does Alexandra come under suspicion, as she should have done if the *Memoirs* were correct, though there are continuing suspicions of Alexandra in *Ant.* 15.183. And there is something implausible in Hyrcanus approaching Malichus so soon after Malichus and Herod had been at war. Nevertheless, other episodes involving Alexandra support *Memoirs'* general picture of her, and a flight to Nabatea (35 miles or so away) was more feasible than flight to Egypt (at least 70 miles), where Alexandra might expect a more enthusiastic, if less secure, welcome. Cleopatra's tenuous position following Actium would have been a factor in the decision.

Hyrcanus had had a roller-coaster career, “a lifetime of diverse and varied fortunes” (*Ant.* 15.179–82). He was high priest for nine years under his mother Queen Alexandra (76–66 BCE); he ruled for three months in 67 BCE; he was deposed by his brother Aristobulus II; he got his honors back for forty more years;⁴ then Aristobulus's son deposed him, disfigured him, and sent him in chains to Parthia; after that King Herod brought him back to the royal court. Hyrcanus must have had a steel backbone to survive such vicissitudes, yet Josephus's assessment claims the opposite:

he seems to have been mild and moderate in all things and to have ruled by leaving most things for his administrators to do, since he was not interested in general affairs nor clever enough to govern a kingdom. That Antipater and Herod advanced so far was due to his mildness, and what he experienced at their hands in the end was neither just nor an act of piety.

(*Ant.* 15.182)

Some of Josephus's assessment of Hyrcanus's character may be true, but he took a hand in "general affairs" and governed ably. He did not desire power much, nor was he sufficiently suspicious to discern others' manipulation of him: by his brother Aristobulus, his nephew Antigonus, his viceroy Antipater, his daughter Alexandra, and Herod. But the crucially important point is that "Antipater and Herod advanced so far [because of] his mildness" (*Ant.* 15.182). This is well put. And, we might add, he did not deserve to die.

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Herod meets Octavian at Rhodes

In early 30 BCE Herod undertook another dangerous winter sea voyage to Rhodes, playing a weak hand boldly. Since, unlike some other Roman dependents, Herod had not abandoned his patron Antony at the last moment before Actium, he needed to confront Octavian's suspicions directly. Antony had had the active support of a long list of subject kings: Bocchus of Libya, Tarcondemus of Upper Cilicia, Philadelphus of Paphlagonia, Mithridates of Commagene, and Sadalas of Thrace. He was supported by contingents from Polemos of Pontus, Malichus of Nabatea, Herod of Judea, and Amyntas of Galatia and Lycaonia (Plutarch, *Antony* 61). When some, such as Amyntas and Deiotarus (*Antony* 63), went over to Octavian, Plutarch specifically mentions Herod remaining on Antony's side. Antony's army melted away at Actium "and soon afterwards Antony learned that Herod of Judaea had declared for Octavius and taken a number of legions and cohorts with him, that the rest of the client kings were deserting him" (*Antony* 71). Plutarch implies Herod's actions were a key to others' decisions.

For a full decade, from 40 BCE—when Antony and Octavian and Herod had spent a week together in Rome—until Actium, Antony had been the lynchpin in Herod's position, and Herod had justified Antony's trust. Octavian knew Herod and had followed his career, but he had little idea how Herod would respond now. He had, however, some reasons for thinking well of Herod, beginning with the ties between Antipater and Julius Caesar, Herod's father and Octavian's adoptive father. In practical military terms Herod had checked Cleopatra's regional power by defeating Nabatea and he had supported Rome's policies in the east for a decade. Given the difficulties Judea posed, confirming Herod as king might seem sensible.

Herod could not have known Octavian's intentions, so Herod feared

the worst. He flirted with the possibility of defying Octavian and offering Antony his army and his support. Perhaps, as *War* 1.389–90 implies, he may have written Antony in Egypt advising him to kill Cleopatra, offering support, an insinuation supported by *Ant.* 15.190–2. Antony soon learned, however, that Herod was abandoning him, and he sent Alexas to forestall Herod's changing sides (Plutarch, *Antony* 71–2). To make matters worse for Antony and Cleopatra, Nabateans demonstrated their opposition by setting fire to ships Cleopatra wanted to drag for escape purposes to the Red Sea.

Antony's cause was obviously hopeless, so Herod risked everything on a single throw: he would go to Octavian to offer his support (*War* 1.387; *Ant.* 15.183). He appointed his younger brother Pheroras to manage affairs in his absence, and then sent his children, with Salome his sister and Cypros his mother, to Masada. Relations within the family were sufficiently tense that he sent Mariamme and her mother Alexandra to Alexandreion, with his steward, another Joseph, and Soemus, an Iturean, in charge. Their instructions, as in the previous crisis in 34 BCE when he went to Laodicea to meet Antony, were to kill both women if he did not survive (*Ant.* 15.184–6). The parallels between this incident and that earlier in 15.65–87 are striking (see below). In the worst case, Joseph and Soëmus were to argue the crown should pass to Herod's children and Pheroras.

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Herod, now about forty-three years old, met the decade-younger Octavian at Rhodes, without crown or other signs of royal status (*War* 1.388–92; *Ant.* 15.188–94). Herod stressed his integrity, saying he would be as loyal to Octavian as he had been to Antony. The transfer from one patron to another was duly concluded; Octavian expressed thanks that Herod did not have to share Antony's defeat (*Ant.* 15.190). The accounts can best be understood as patronage operating at the highest levels of society (Wallace-Hadrill 1989; especially Braund 1989, 137–52). Octavian received Herod more enthusiastically than Herod had any right to expect, promising he would reign “more securely than before” (*War* 1.391), confirming Herod as “friend and ally,” and bestowing additional honors (*War* 1.392–3; *Ant.* 15.195; Lintott 1993, 32–6). Nevertheless, when Herod interceded for Alexas of Laodicea, a go-between for Antony and Herod, Octavian executed him anyway, perhaps because Alexas had encouraged Antony to reject reconciliation with Octavia, Octavian's sister (Plutarch, *Antony* 72; *War* 1.393).

Octavian progressed triumphantly through Syria and Judea to Egypt,

pursuing Antony and Cleopatra (*War* 1.394; *Ant.* 15.199; Plutarch, *Antony* 74), confirming publicly Herod's new relationship with Octavian. Herod entertained Octavian "with all the resources of his realm" at Ptolemais (*War* 1.394; *Ant.* 15.199–200) and accompanied him to the Egyptian border, where he provided water and wine and a gift of 800 talents he could ill afford. Herod's generosity had a desired, if unexpected, result: Octavian gave Herod territories Cleopatra had held, as well as two Decapolis cities—Hippos (Susita) and Gadara (Umm Qeis)—and Samaria, Straton's Tower (Caesarea Maritima), Joppa (Yafo), Anthedon (Agrippias), and Gaza, together with Cleopatra's bodyguard of 400 Gauls (*War* 1.396–7; *Ant.* 15.217).

Octavian rejected Antony's appeal to retire to private life in Athens but was willing to be lenient to Cleopatra if she abandoned Antony (Plutarch, *Antony* 72–3). Antony's troops gradually defected as Octavian reached Alexandria. When Antony tried to commit suicide, thinking Cleopatra dead, he fumbled the attempt, and was carried to Cleopatra, in whose arms he died. She too tried unsuccessfully to commit suicide and lived on for some days, but was successful in a second attempt (Plutarch, *Antony* 73–87).

By the spring of 30 BCE Herod had successfully finessed transfer of his loyalty to Octavian. Cleopatra was dead, Malichus weakened, and Herod was preeminent in the Levant, without significant rivals externally or internally. Moreover, he now held power over an increased kingdom of Judea, with new outlets to the sea. His wife Mariamme added legitimacy to his reign in the eyes of traditionalists, now that Hyrcanus II was dead. He had sired several potential heirs: Antipater, son of Doris; and Alexander, Aristobulus, Salampsio, and Cypros, all children of Mariamme.

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At this point in *War* Josephus records later additions to Herod's territory (about 24/23 BCE), the addition of Zenodorus's territory and Herod's appointment as procurator (*epitropos*) of all Syria (both 20 BCE; *War* 1.398–400). He then summarizes Herod's building activities (1.401–28), after which (1.429–30) he includes a summary that sounds as if his source is nearing a conclusion.

Notes

1 Not further identified but referred to by Livy (*Periochae*) and Cassius Dio (48.41)

- as Peppedius or Poppaediis or Pompedius Silo. There was a Poppaediis Silo, active in the social war, who killed Cato in 89, but was himself killed in 88, possibly related.
- 2 *War* and *Antiquities* are relatively independent from here until *War* 1.387; *Ant.* 15.187. Josephus has additional sources in *Antiquities*—most having to do with Hasmoneans—that he has not integrated well. On sources in *Ant.* 15–16, see Cohen 1979, 53–7.
 - 3 Joseph was husband of Salome (*Ant.* 15.81, correctly; a duplicate of the same incident). See also, correctly, *War* 1.441–2, where Josephus emphasizes Joseph’s loyalty. There is a strong parallelism between this and the later account, with which there must be overlap and confusion ([Chapter 5](#)). The instructions about Mariamme fit better later.
 - 4 Both parts are inaccurate; he did not get all honors back as he was called only ethnarch, not king; and it was for twenty-three years. This is from a source favorable to Hyrcanus, for the figure 40 requires that Hyrcanus was king from 67 BCE, almost forty years.

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5 From Rhodes to Rome (30–17 BCE)

Mariamme's execution

Herod returned from Rhodes satisfied with his successes; he was reunited with Mariamme (Schalit 1969, 566–70; Kokkinos 1998, 211–15), but he found the family paralyzed with jealousies and tensions. There is, however, difficulty in sorting out what to make of the parallels, overlaps, and disagreements between *War* 1.441–3 and *Ant.* 15.65–87, 15.185–7, and 15.202–39 ([Chapter 4](#) for one version; appended note, below). It is likely that the various episodes involving Mariamme were part of a complex sequence falling at this juncture in the narrative. The main outline is the following.

When Herod went to Rhodes he left his brother Pheroras in charge of matters in Alexandreion (*Ant.* 15.185–7), with a steward named Joseph—confused in the tradition with Herod's brother-in-law Joseph, by now already dead—and an Iturean named Soëmus responsible for Mariamme and Alexandra. At Alexandreion Soëmus revealed to Mariamme that she and Alexandra were to be executed if Herod failed to return (*Ant.* 15.202–8, with a veiled hint that Mariamme and Soëmus may have been attracted to each other). After Herod returned with his good news he reinstalled all the women, including Salome and Cypros, in the palace in Jerusalem. He expected renewed sexual relations with his wife, but Mariamme refused his advances, perhaps not unnaturally, for she had had five children in under ten years. Herod wanted to punish her, so Salome and Cypros, who disliked Mariamme, provoked him even more. Then, when Mariamme requested that Soëmus be given command as *meridarch* of part of Herod's kingdom (governor of a province), Herod agreed (*Ant.* 15.216). He left to meet Octavian at Ptolemais, accompanying him to the Egyptian border and returning with promises of new powers and lands. A little later he left Jerusalem again to



Figure 5.1 Jerusalem sits at the intersection of three north–south valleys, the Kidron on the east, the Hinnom on the west, and the Tyropoeon in the middle. Originally the city occupied a narrow spur between the Kidron and Tyropoeon Valleys, with the holy place on the site of the Dome of the Rock.

During his short conjugal visits in Jerusalem Herod and Mariamme's relationship deteriorated, with passionate arguments and reconciliations: over sex, over family, and over other men, perhaps including Soëmus (*Ant.* 15.218–22, 15.82–6; *War* 1.442). Herod's sister Salome, "the Satanic figure" (Schalit 1969, 563–644, here 571; Kokkinos 1998, 177–92; Ilan 1999, 115–25), or perhaps Salome and Cypros together, stirred the pot with stories of love potions and poisons (*Ant.* 15.223–7, 15.80–1; *War* 1.443). Herod learned by torturing a court eunuch that Soëmus had revealed to Mariamme the instructions Herod gave him (*Ant.* 15.229, 15.87; *War* 1.441–2), convincing Herod that Soëmus and Mariamme were guilty of adultery. He executed Soëmus forthwith, and sent Mariamme to trial, a complex and unhappy process that consumed more than a year.

In this tangle Alexandra saved her own skin by abandoning

Mariamme; after Alexandra confirmed the accusations of Mariamme's ingratitude to Herod (*Ant.* 15.232–6), Mariamme went calmly to her death in ca. 29 BCE, after a procedure that followed Hellenistic custom (Ilan 1999, 160). Josephus attempts a balanced epitaph for Mariamme (*Ant.* 15.237; see also *b. BB* 3b; *b. Qid* 70b): beautiful, dignified, and “unexcelled in continence,” but quarrelsome, unreasonable, and fond of speaking her mind. In sum, she showed less maturity in dealing with family antagonisms—particularly with Salome and Cypros—than one might expect from someone twenty-five years old, married to Herod for eight or nine years, and Hyrcanus's daughter.

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There is no more tragic episode in Herod's story. From different perspectives Herod and Mariamme were star-crossed lovers, a badly mismatched pair, spouses doomed by malicious relatives, a couple trapped in a political web. Perhaps Herod was a middle-aged tyrant wanting to own his wife, or a vulgar plebeian who failed to win his princess's respect. Mariamme may have been a young woman who ignored her husband's jealousy, or a “royal” who abhorred the commoner in her husband.

Josephus provides a conclusion. Herod's remorse almost drove him out of his mind. He refused to believe she was dead and spoke to her as if she were still present (*War* 1.444). His love for her had a divine madness to it, for which he suffered a sort of divine punishment (*Ant.* 15.240–1). He tried distractions, lost interest in the kingdom, and went off to the wilderness; he became so ill many thought he would die where he lay in Samaria (*Ant.* 15.242–6). His condition was desperately serious; he was in danger of losing his grip; the kingdom was neglected. Through much of 28 BCE Judea was rudderless while, at about this time, there was a serious plague (*Ant.* 15.243).

Appended note

The background to Mariamme's execution is complex, with several issues hanging on the relationship of two similar accounts of incidents several years apart: in both, Herod left Jerusalem to face a test, one with Antony and one with Octavian; he entrusted Mariamme to someone else with instructions to kill her if he failed to return; the person in charge revealed this information to Mariamme; that person was accused of adultery and executed. *Prima facie* the accounts seem doublets, so it is important to decide what happened and when (Schalit 1969, 575–88;

First, the facts. *War* ignores the earlier incident in 35 BCE when Herod visited Antony in Laodicea. But then we find: (1) that *War* 1.441–3 contains, within a somewhat garbled and unreliable section, an account of Herod's order to kill Mariamme in 30 BCE, an order that was explicitly addressed to Joseph, Salome's husband, ending with both Joseph and Mariamme being executed (at 1.441 there is a slip referring back to Antony, who was already dead). (2) *Ant.* 15.65–87 parallels *War*'s account, but includes the earlier incident involving Antony at Laodicea; the person in charge of the realm and also guarding Mariamme was a different Joseph, Herod's uncle. The result then was that Herod, near to killing his wife, executed only Joseph, his brother-in-law, not his uncle. (3) In *Ant.* 15.185–239 there is a very long, somewhat interrupted account, which should be divided into two separate accounts. In the first, *Ant.* 15.185–7 and 202–8, Herod left Pheroras his brother in charge of matters while he hurried to Octavian at Rhodes, leaving Mariamme and her mother at Alexandreion under the charge of charge of Soëmus and Joseph, a steward (same name, although this account includes a flashback to the other Joseph and the earlier incident). Soëmus disclosed his instructions, plans that Mariamme, not surprisingly, deeply resented. When Herod returned from Egypt (not Rhodes) he declared his love for her. (4) The remainder (*Ant.* 15.209–39) is a second, partly (though not entirely) independent account: it begins with his return from a sea voyage (from Rhodes, not Egypt), drawing on materials found elsewhere (*War* 1.396–7 and 1.437), together with an altogether new incident involving a love potion and suspicions of poison. In the end Soëmus was executed and Mariamme was tried, while Alexandra rescued herself at Mariamme's expense.

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The rhetorical character of *Antiquities* with its flashback (3 above) and secondary elements is a formulaic attempt to overcome the obvious difficulty posed by the parallelism just noted; it is worthless as evidence for the reliability of *Antiquities* at this point (contra Schürer 1973–87, 1.302–3, n.49). The similarities between (1), (2), and (3) (including the flashback), especially the references to Joseph the brother-in-law, Joseph an uncle (Kokkinos 1998, 150–5), and Joseph a steward, are perplexing. Were all different? All the same? Or is there some confusion? We conclude there is confusion, and propose that Joseph, Herod's brother-in-law, was involved in an incident (probably not involving Mariamme) that led to his execution in 35 BCE, that the same name Joseph was attached to the later incident, as in (3), and prompted a story that

Mariamme was involved in Joseph's death in 35. Number (2), above, is fabricated to explain Joseph's death on the occasion of Herod's return from his meeting with Antony. The resemblances between (1) and (2) thus are natural, because they ultimately refer to the same event, in 30 BCE, though (2) wrongly attributes it to 35 BCE and (1) wrongly imagines that it was in 30 that Joseph was executed. Each is partly right but mostly wrong. That leaves (3) and (4), which are presented as one discontinuous narrative. Both are set in 30 BCE, though some of the circumstantial details are garbled, because there are elements drawn from more than one tradition, as noted above.

What is correct is the following: Pheroras was left in charge; Joseph, a steward, and Soëmus were responsible for Mariamme; Soëmus was summarily executed, since more guilt attached to him; the sequence of events was long and complex and occupied about a year; Mariamme was put on trial; and Alexandra in the end abandoned her. But the comings and goings are mixed up, the reference to news of the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra is probably wrong; it may be wrong that Cypros and Salome were put in Masada for safety. This analysis does not exhaust the problems or the possibilities, but it offers a fairly straightforward explanation of how matters stood. We summarize issues by asking and answering some questions:

- When did the incident happen, 35 BCE, 30/29 BCE, or both? It happened in 30/29 BCE, with Mariamme's execution taking place in late 29 BCE.
- Which of Herod's trips was it, to Laodicea, Rhodes, or Egypt? To Rhodes.
- Who was in charge, Joseph the brother-in-law, Joseph an uncle, or Pheroras? Pheroras.

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- Who guarded Mariamme, Joseph the brother-in-law, Joseph an uncle, or Joseph and Soëmus? Joseph and Soëmus, mostly the latter.
- Who made the charge of adultery, Herod, Salome, Salome and Cypros, or Alexandra? Uncertain, but probably Salome and Alexandra separately.
- Whose deaths resulted, Joseph and Mariamme, Joseph, or Soëmus and Mariamme? Soëmus and Mariamme.

The earlier incident in 35 BCE is incorrectly placed and told. Something happened in 35 BCE to cause Joseph's death but we cannot now get at the truth of it. In 30/29 BCE the more significant set of events occurred, and these are best reproduced, even if garbled, in *Ant.* 15.185–239.

The deaths of Alexandra and Costobar

Mariamme's death created a political vacuum, not because she was essential in matters of policy but because of Herod's overwrought reaction. Vacuums are filled. Few were ambitious or experienced enough to take control of events when Herod was almost totally *mentos non compos*. None of his sons was old enough to insinuate himself into a position of power; Antipater, the oldest, was about seventeen years of age in 28 BCE, but he and Doris were excluded from the court. Herod's brother Pheroras carried some responsibilities but he usually kept a low profile. Herod's sister Salome, meddlesome though she was, remained loyal to her brother and would not, or could not, usurp his position.

Only Alexandra, Mariamme's mother, had the will and opportunity to attempt a coup as Herod lay ill in Samaria, though Mariamme may have participated in its early stages (Ilan 1999, 175). Alexandra first tried to occupy the Antonia fortress, built by Herod while Mark Antony was still alive, which overlooked the temple, with a fosse between the fortress and the temple perimeter so the two were not connected physically.

Alexandra also attempted to occupy fortifications on the site of the present citadel (possibly, depending on the dates of their construction, the towers referred to as Phasaël, Hippicus, and Mariamme). Josephus exaggerates when he says that whoever controlled these fortifications controlled the whole nation but their importance cannot be doubted, for they protected the easiest entrance to the city. Alexandra urged the commanders to surrender to her and Herod's sons to forestall trouble if Herod died. Obviously she had in mind Mariamme's sons, the oldest only about eight in 28 BCE, with herself as regent of her grandchildren (*Ant.* 15.247–9).

This ploy failed, and the commanders, including Achiab, Herod's cousin (Kokkinos 1998, 153–4; Applebaum 1988, 669), stayed loyal to Herod. When a messenger brought word of Alexandra's treachery to Herod at Samaria he ordered her immediate execution, without recourse to a council. Her attempted *putsch* galvanized Herod into action. With Alexandra removed he turned to other dissidents, executing several old associates. "He was in an ugly mood and . . . he found fault with

Costobar, the most notable victim, was a close friend, married to Herod’s sister Salome (after her first husband’s execution), and a noble Idumean (“first in rank”; *Ant.* 15.253) whose family were priests of Cos, to whose old ways he remained loyal (15.255). Herod had appointed Costobar governor of Idumea when he and Salome were married in about 34 BCE, even though he refused to accept Judaism; if, as is possible, he was already circumcised as an Idumean, he may have been considered a suitable partner for Salome. But then Costobar wanted to switch to Cleopatra in 32/31 BCE, when Nabatea shook Herod’s hold on Judea; Costobar hoped Cleopatra would persuade Antony to give him control of Idumea so he could gain a larger role. Not only did Antony refuse Cleopatra’s request, he must have leaked the information to Herod, who was persuaded by his sister and his mother not to act against Costobar (*Ant.* 15.256–8).

In a surprising development, Salome divorced Costobar (Ilan 1999, 146, suggests she followed Roman law as a Roman citizen; see also [Chapter 12](#)). She charged that four of Herod’s associates (Costobar, Lysimachus, Antipater, and Dositheus) were planning revolt, and that earlier in the waning days of the siege of Jerusalem Costobar had sheltered Hasmonean opponents of Herod—the sons of Baba—on his own estate for personal benefit. Offers of a reward for their capture had elicited no response. When Salome told Herod all this a decade later, he had the remaining male Hasmoneans executed (*Ant.* 15.259–66). Dositheus may be the same person who brought about Hyrcanus II’s death by divulging Hyrcanus’s letter to Malichus; Lysimachus is not otherwise known; the name Antipater may suggest he was a relative of Herod’s. To this list of executions of elite persons can be added Soëmus and Joseph, Salome’s husband (see pp. 142–4). Herod had lost the support of some of the elite on whom he counted. He was depending more and more on his own counsels: “the kingdom was wholly in Herod’s power, there being no one of high rank to stand in the way of his unlawful acts” (*Ant.* 15.266).

Judean society

Josephus’s narrative provides few chronological markers for the mid-20s and it is less sequential, so an account of this period is difficult. Some general features of Judean society, however, can be reconstructed. The

overall impression is of a troubled period, disturbed by natural disorders, religious difficulties, and a tendency for Herod to hold the population in subjection, though at a later stage (*Ant.* 15.326) all seemed to go well, both for Herod and for Judean society.

In Herod's thirteenth year there was a famine. This was probably the year 25/24 BCE (*Ant.* 15.299–316), as we now think, though the date 28/27 is also possible. We prefer 25/24 BCE for the following reasons: (1) the natural sequence at the end of this section is that the expedition to Arabia Felix in 25/24 followed directly from the natural disasters ("at this time" in 15.337); (2) Sebaste's reconstruction was at its height; (3) Petronius was prefect of Egypt, and his dates were 24–21 BCE (*Ant.* 15.307; Schürer 1973–87, 1.290–1, n.9). In favor of the earlier date are the following: (1) *Ant.* 15.299 presupposes not 15.298 but 15.267 and the death of Costobar; (2) the "same year" could refer to the beginning of Sebaste's building (27 BCE); (3) a sabbatical year in 30/29, when fields were fallow—and thus with stretched food supplies, drought, famine, illness, and no seed-grain (15.300–2, mentioning a second year)—fits with the sequence of events. (4) *Ant.* 15.243 puts the plague in the period when Herod was disabled. Though Josephus allows that the drought that contributed to the famine was a whim of nature, he explains theologically that God was angry: "Necessity made them find new ways of sustaining themselves" (15.303).

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In truth it was not "them" but Herod who found new ways. (1) He melted his gold and silver ornamentation and jewelry to a usable form for exchange. (2) He sent the bullion to his friend Petronius, prefect of Egypt, who gave Judea's needs priority over others' needs, a decision that would have needed Augustus's approval. (3) Herod doled out relief provisions sparingly to those capable of producing food. (4) He set up bread kitchens for the aged and infirm. (5) He countered the loss of sheep, whose wool and hides provided winter clothing. (6) He "treated the Gentile cities skillfully and humanely, and he cultivated the local rulers" by giving food supplies to neighboring Syrian cities (*Ant.* 15.327). (7) His rebuilding of Sebaste may have been a Keynesian-style famine-relief project to boost the economy. His remedial actions, good will, and protection brought about a "reversal of attitude" in Judea (*Ant.* 15.308, and 309–10; see [Chapter 10](#)) as well as an improvement in relations with his neighbors in Syria (15.311–14), followed by an international reputation for generosity and innovation (15.315–16).

Herod created a national relief program, almost the beginning of a

state economy along new lines, with economic actions used positively on an international scale: he got relief from Egypt, where the Nile's annual flooding ensured food supply that offset the effects of drought; then he used grain in dealings with others in much the same way Queen Helena of Adiabene did in 46 CE; and he funded the relief program by stripping his palaces of precious metals, supporting it from his personal resources.

A second issue troubled Judea during the mid-20s. Herod now had the kingdom entirely in his control, so he departed, says Josephus, "from the native customs and . . . [corrupted] the ancient way of life" (*Ant.* 15.267). He established quadrennial athletic contests in Jerusalem, with a theater and an amphitheater, inviting contestants to vie for generous prizes in athletic events, music, drama, and chariot races (15.268–71). One building was decorated with reminders of Rome's power, which some thought offensive to Israel's aniconic Torah, with outrage focused on "trophies," which Herod's critics assumed were images surrounded by weapons. Herod attempted to reassure his critics, but when this had no effect and the protests continued (*Ant.* 15.275) he embarrassed the leaders by proving there were no images, just bare wood covered with ornaments.

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Josephus says the building in question was a theater, but decorations do not suit a theater as well as an amphitheater. The incident presupposes inscriptions in honor of Octavian/Augustus, trophies recalling battles, displays of garments and vessels, together with a supply of animals for gladiatorial combat (*Ant.* 15.272–9). The degrees of offense may have been disputed and the structures were likely outside the city: both could have been wooden structures southwest of the city, but it is possible the theater was a mile or so south of the West Hill in the Wadi es-Shamm.

Such cultural concerns were not entirely new for Jerusalem. There had been a gymnasium for educational and athletic purposes in the Seleucid era, and the Hasmonean family tombs at Modein had displayed trophies without problems:

Over the tomb of his father and brothers Simon raised a lofty monument and faced back and front with polished stone. He erected seven pyramids, arranged in pairs, for his father and mother and four brothers. He contrived an elaborate setting for the pyramids: he surrounded them with tall columns [a stoa?] surmounted with trophies of armor as a perpetual memorial, and with carved ships alongside the trophies, plainly visible to those at sea.

The perception that Herod opposed national customs continued even after the vigor of the protests dissipated (*Ant.* 15.280–1), though how widespread the muted opposition was is not said.

Nevertheless, ten persons conspired to assassinate Herod, in a plot not unlike the one against Julius Caesar two decades earlier. Concealing daggers under their cloaks, the conspirators headed to the theater to find Herod. Warned of the conspiracy, Herod returned to the palace, the conspirators were rounded up, they proudly confessed, and were executed. The informer was torn apart by a crowd, which led to reprisals against the lynch mob (*Ant.* 15.282–90). Josephus says Herod reduced freedoms to limit the possibility of rebellion because of conflicts over the laws (*Ant.* 15.291).

At this point Josephus lists evidence for Herod’s wish for security: (1) a palace in Jerusalem; (2) the Antonia fortress, overlooking the temple; (3) reconstruction of Samaria (renamed Sebaste); (4) Caesarea Maritima, which Josephus understands as a fortress for the entire nation; (5) a military settlement at Gabae, not far from Megiddo; (6) a military settlement at Heshbon in Perea; (7) garrisons “throughout the entire nation” to restrain revolts; (8) reconstruction of Samaria (repeated) as a walled city with a military settlement nearby at Pente Komai (*Ant.* 15.292–8).

The list is a grab bag, including important and less significant projects. Josephus puts a negative “spin” on Herod’s public policy (see [Chapter 10](#)) and shows some sloppiness, such as the double references to Samaria/Sebaste. Not all the projects were for security: the primary purpose of the two military settlements was to fulfill Herod’s obligation to retiring veterans; the list’s two centerpieces—the huge urban projects of Sebaste and Caesarea—had little to do with security, but were aimed rather at stimulating the economy and honoring Augustus, and, in the case of Sebaste, perhaps expressing gratitude for nurturing Herod back to health.

Material gathered in *Antiquities* but neglected in *War* praises Herod for generous relief of the natural disasters Judea faced and pillories him for religious problems and for general oppression of the population. These comments stand in tension with each other, so some prefer one portrait to the other. A more balanced conclusion is that Herod used a

carrot-and-stick strategy: he kept his subjects fearful of punishment but he was considerate when there was a crisis (*Ant.* 15.326), so he was “well spoken of among foreign nations” (15.316).



Figure 5.2 Herod’s new city of Sebaste (previously Samaria) occupied the hill in the center of the photograph, with the Temple of Roma and Augustus on its highest point. The photograph looks south to Sebaste, with a stadium and theater on this side of the hill. The modern city of Nablus, with the center of Samaritan worship above it on Mount Gerizim, is a few miles east.

Two things are certain. First, Josephus’s portrayal of the mid-20s as difficult and troublesome is no doubt partly correct and partly Josephus’s construction, for his evidence comes from various periods. Second, the two internal events most securely dated within this period—the famine and the trophies incident—offer a relatively benign picture of Herod, at best benevolent, at worst inoffensive. The assassination attempt with its far from benign consequences was the action of a small group. In sum, the information we have is mixed; Josephus draws a picture—not dissimilar to pictures of Augustus—with both light and dark shades of Herod’s character.

Herod and Augustus

Octavian was proclaimed Imperator Caesar Augustus, January 16, 27 BCE, from then on known commonly and more simply as Augustus. Although we have adopted the usual distinction, Goldsworthy emphasizes (2014, 6–7) that he never called himself Octavian, he was always Caesar. The Senate’s Act of Settlement conferred new powers with far-reaching consequences. In Judea the effects were more seen than felt. The proclamation inaugurated a spurt of building activity—duplicated in other parts of the Empire but nowhere as quickly and as visibly as in Judea—associated with the name Caesar Augustus: Caesarea Maritima with its harbor separately named Sebastos (the Greek equivalent of Augustus; see *Ant.* 15.331–41); a renamed and rebuilt city of Sebaste (15.342); the naming of one part of Herod’s Jerusalem palace Caesareum (15.318); three temples to Roma and Augustus, at Caesarea Maritima, Sebaste, and Panias, among the earliest Sebasteia in the Roman world (see [Figures 8.4](#); 9.7; 9.8).

Josephus says Herod paid a “flattering attention . . . to Caesar and the most influential Romans,” forcing him to depart from Jewish customs by founding cities, erecting temples and statues (*Ant.* 15.328–30), a trend detailed by Cassius Dio:

In this way he had his supremacy ratified by the senate and by the people as well. But as he wished even so to be thought democratic, while he accepted all the care and oversight of the public business, on the ground that it required some attention on his part, yet he declared he would not personally govern all the provinces, and that in the case of such provinces as he should govern he would not do so indefinitely; and he did, in fact, restore to the senate the weaker provinces, on the ground that they were peaceful and free from war, while he retained the more powerful, alleging that they were insecure and precarious and either had enemies on their borders or were able on their own account to begin a serious revolt. His professed motive in this was that the senate might fearlessly enjoy the finest portion of the empire, while he himself had the hardships and the dangers; but his real purpose was that by this arrangement the senators will be unarmed and unprepared for battle, while he alone had arms and maintained soldiers. Africa, Numidia, Asia, Greece with Epirus, the Dalmatian and Macedonian districts, Sicily, Crete and the Cyrenaic portion of Libya, Bithynia with Pontus which adjoined it, Sardinia and Baetica were held to belong to the people and the senate; while to Caesar belonged the remainder of Spain—that is, the district of Tarraco and Lusitania—and all the Gauls—that is, Gallia Narbonensis, Gallia Lugdunensis, Aquitania, and Belgica, ... together with Coele-Syria, as it is called, Phoenicia, Cilicia, Cyprus and Egypt ... afterwards he gave Cyprus and Gallia Narbonensis back to the people, and for himself took Dalmatia instead.

... in reality Caesar himself was destined to have absolute control of all matters for all time, because he was not only master of the funds (nominally, to be sure, he had separated the public funds from his own, but as a matter of fact, he always spent the former also as he saw fit), but also commanded the soldiers. At all events, when his ten-year period came to an end, there was voted to him another five years, then five more, after that ten, and again another ten, and then ten for the fifth time, so that by the succession of ten-year periods he continued to be sole ruler for life. And it is for this reason that the subsequent emperors, though no longer appointed for a specified period, but for their whole life once for all, nevertheless always held a celebration every ten years, as if then renewing their sovereignty once more; and this is done even at the present day.

... And when Caesar had actually carried out his promises, the name Augustus was at length bestowed upon him by the senate and by the people. For when they wished to call him by some distinctive title, and men were proposing one title and another and urging its selection, Caesar was exceedingly desirous of being called Romulus, but when he perceived that this caused him to be suspected of desiring the kingship, he desisted from his efforts to obtain it, and took the title of "Augustus," signifying that he was more than human; for all the most precious and sacred objects are termed *augusta*. Therefore they addressed him also in Greek as Sebastos, meaning an august personage, from the passive of the verb *sebazō*, "to revere."

(Cassius Dio 53.12, 15–16)

Dio's analysis is improved by almost two centuries of hindsight (he was born around 163/4 CE); it is clear, brief, and fits the period under discussion, with a division between senatorial and Imperial provinces, the east falling to Augustus, and the quasi-independent role for "kingdoms" that enjoyed their own laws.

Augustus's authority was not static. In 23 BCE he received expanded authority over all provinces, increased authority within Rome's bounds, and more responsibility over the Senate's agenda (Cassius Dio 53.22). He also took charge of the grain supply, after famine and flood and civil disturbance. In 19 BCE he took on the role of commissioner of morals and other civic responsibilities, "believing them to be necessary" (Cassius Dio 54.10). Other writers commented on Augustus's role and powers; of special interest is Philo, a Jewish philosopher caught up over the status of Judaism within the Empire, but one willing to accommodate himself to the fashions of the Roman world. The following excerpt, from Philo's account of the embassy to Gaius (Caligula), defends the loyalty of Alexandrian Jews in their dispute with the Greek community (40 CE):

What about the Emperor whose every virtue outshone human nature. ... [A]lmost the whole human race would have been destroyed in internecine conflict and

disappeared completely, had it not been for one man, one *princeps*, Augustus, who deserves the title of “Averter of evil.” This is the Caesar who lulled the storms which were crashing everywhere, who healed the sickness common to Greeks and barbarians alike. ... This is he who not merely loosened but broke the fetters which had confined and oppressed the world. ... This is he who set every city again at liberty, who reduced disorder to order, who civilized all the unfriendly, savage tribes and brought them into harmony with each other ... and who hellenized the most important parts of the barbarian world.

(Philo, *Legatio*, 143–7; Smallwood 1970)

We quote these Roman and Jewish assessments of Augustus to convey the opinions of educated independent-minded persons. Even allowing for Philo’s rhetorical purpose, it is significant that an Alexandrian Jew, a generation after Augustus, could make such unexpected comments about the Emperor’s role. Philo’s opinions may illustrate how a fellow Jew, the dependent king Herod, could show such enthusiasm for Augustus and his own responsibilities.

Suetonius enunciates Augustus’s policy on monarchies:

He nearly always restored the kingdoms which he conquered to their defeated dynasties, rarely combined them with others, and followed a policy of linking together his royal allies by mutual ties of friendship or intermarriage, which he was never slow to propose. ... He also brought up many of their children with his own, and gave them the same education.

(Suetonius, *Augustus* 47–8)

As Suetonius describes, Augustus expanded Herod’s kingdom and even toyed with the idea of increasing it more, but he held back consistent with his policy; he approved ties of intermarriage with other sovereigns and he brought up Herod’s sons in Rome with his own children and grandchildren.

Amici

Rome used a variety of relationships with territories around the Mediterranean to expand its zone of influence. Though Rome sometimes expanded by brute conquest, it also grew by friendly persuasion through relationships with “friends and allies” (*amici utque socii*). Its overall success was achieved expeditiously and economically and without loss of Roman lives through dependent kingdoms. After a period of indirect control, total absorption could be effected more easily. A number of states accepted subordinate roles over a relatively long period (Luttwak 1979): for example, Mauretania (Numidia), Cappadocia, Armenia, Pontus, Galatia, Emesa, Sparta, Commagene, Nabatea, Britain, Thrace,

Colchis, Bosphorus, Thrace, and Lycia. The two most illuminating contemporaneous with respect to Judea were Cappadocia—under Herod’s friend and rival Archelaus—and Mauretania—under Juba (Jacobson 2001).

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Neither part of the commonly used term “client kings” is altogether accurate: clientism was a model but not a perfect model, and not all rulers of such states were kings. To some extent the mutual obligations of Rome and another state were a glorified version of the relations of patron and client in Roman society. In the case of Augustus and Herod the client relationships had developed over a lengthy period, beginning with the connection of Antipater and Julius Caesar. Following their deaths, and then Pompey’s death, the connection passed to Herod and Mark Antony. The Senate formally offered Herod the crown on the nomination of Antony and Octavian. And finally, after Antony’s death, the relationship between Herod as King and Octavian as Princeps became clear. Among the Levant’s small states there was a distinction between states that had kings (“reserved . . . for its mostly loyal and most capable allies”, Sartre 2005, 71) and others that had tetrarchs or ethnarchs. Not all were equal in power and influence; Sartre says the Herods were the most dependent on Rome—because they owed their royal title entirely to Rome (Sartre 2005, 72)—but this could also mean Judea was more influential and perhaps even more independent.

Not all such relationships were as complicated as Judea’s. Its connection with Rome began under the Hasmoneans, developed to a new level under the combined weight of Julius Caesar and Antipater, and matured through Herod’s speedy and sure-footed shifts in alliances, culminating in his meeting with Octavian at Rhodes.

Judea illustrates another aspect of such relations; most *amici* were on the edge, the frontier, a point beyond which states and tribes were unknown or hostile. Allies were useful to Rome in a variety of ways; for example, Judea helped keep Parthia at a distance; it added to Rome’s military strength in foreign adventures, as with Herod’s support of Antony in Armenia; it might assist in an exploratory trip, such as Aelius Gallus’s into the unfamiliar waters of the Red Sea; and it could be a primary instrument in holding Nabatea in check.

Dependent regions could be difficult to control, for reasons of distance, geography, tribal issues, or other religious or political factors. The one crucial element was that none could have an independent

foreign policy; all accepted Rome's policies and entanglements, and in exchange got Rome's support if they were under pressure from aggressive neighbors. This meant, on one hand, not engaging in hostilities with neighbors, and on the other hand keeping peace within their borders, suppressing brigandage, checking internal unrest, and managing finances effectively.

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States on the Roman frontiers might be buffers between unassimilated states and Rome; they might also buffer indigenous populations wishing to continue local religious or cultural practices by delaying imposition of Rome's practices. In some cases Rome's cults, especially in the Greek east, could be assimilated to local cults (Price 1985) even as Rome could assimilate others' cults. The relationships worked effectively in both directions.

The relationships were not immutable, however. Again Judea is a good example. What began as an allied relationship in the late second century BCE became an ethnarchy in the early first century BCE, then a kingdom under Herod, then an ethnarchy *cum* tetrarchies in the early first century CE, then a kingdom again, then an ethnarchy again, with one portion of the territory being a province, before the whole was finally absorbed into the Roman provincial system. Though Judea's story was more convoluted than most, it illustrates the fact that affiliated territories were absorbed eventually as provinces.

From Rome's point of view gradualism made good sense. Regions considered difficult to assimilate because of fiercely held religious and cultural traditions could be drawn gradually to Rome, or so it was hoped, under the benign influence of a compliant royal family. In most cases this worked well, and in many cases—Judea and Britain were partial exceptions—the transition to becoming a Roman province was unremarkable. In the case of Nabatea, Judea's neighbor, there was a relatively peaceful transition into the Province of Arabia in 106 CE, occurring almost unnoticed despite a lengthy pre-history.

Thus,

Rome became the patron of the Mediterranean world. *Amici* or *clientes* supported her economically and militarily, and, as Rome reciprocated in kind, client kingdoms benefitted from Rome's patronage. These kingdoms retained effective autonomy and freedom while paying their *officia* to Rome.

(Hunt 2002, 8; citing Gruen 1984)

Following Octavian's decisive victory at Actium, relations between the Imperial family and the families of dependent kings were encouraged and expanded.

The kingdom most directly parallel to Judea was Juba II's Mauretania, at the western end of the Mediterranean. Juba II (ca. 50 BCE–24 CE), a generation younger than Herod, married Cleopatra Selene (40 BCE–6 CE), the daughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII of Egypt and the twin sister of Alexander Helios (Roller 2003). These connections put Mauretania at the center of dynastic politics in the Mediterranean; Juba's father, Juba I of Numidia, had been an ally of Pompey's but was defeated by Julius Caesar in 46 BCE, when Numidia became a province (Caesar, *African War* 97), shortly after Caesar settled matters in Egypt with the assistance of Antipater, Herod's father. Juba II's education in Rome set him apart from similar kings and prepared him to become an author and a scholar of geography, art, and natural science. He was likely closer than Herod to Julius Caesar and Augustus. Augustus named him King of Numidia (29–25 BCE), but then Juba and Cleopatra moved to Mauretania (25 BCE–24 CE), where they embarked on a vigorous building campaign, especially at Caesarea (Cherchell, Algeria) and Volubilis (near Meknes, Morocco).

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Juba II married a second time in 6 or 7 CE; his new wife was Glaphyra, daughter of Archelaus of Cappadocia. She had already been married to Herod's son Alexander, whom Herod executed in 7 BCE along with his brother Aristobulus. Then, complicating matters, Glaphyra divorced Juba and married Archelaus, another of Herod's sons, in about 7 CE. Although Archelaus was his father's primary beneficiary in 4 BCE, inheriting Judea and Samaritis ([Chapter 1](#)), his star was not shining brightly at this point, for Augustus exiled him in 6 CE to Gaul. Mauretania's political and dynastic history was less complicated than Judea's, in part because of Juba II's longtime personal friendship with Octavian and his direct dependence on Rome from the outset of his career, a different story from Herod's rapid switches among patrons as political conditions changed.

Intermarriage among client kinds is well illustrated by the marital ties between Herod, Archelaus of Cappadocia, Juba II, and Cleopatra Selene, not to mention the relationships between Cleopatra's mother Cleopatra VII and Rome's leading figures, Caesar and Mark Antony (Antony had also been a lover of the mother of Archelaus of Cappadocia). The mutual interests of Cappadocia, Mauretania,

Numidia, Egypt, and Judea were tied together in a single web of convoluted relationships, all dependent on the Imperial family. The connections continued in subsequent generations ([Chapter 13](#)).

Cappadocia's marital connections with Judea demonstrate a negative aspect of the ties among dependent kings. Archelaus of Cappadocia (ruled 36 BCE–17 CE) involved himself directly in Herodian family troubles, prompted by concern for his daughter Glaphyra. A trip to Judea, portrayed as intended to discipline his daughter, was in fact intervention on behalf of Alexander and Aristobulus; it did little to stabilize family relationships, though temporarily it may have helped Alexander and Aristobulus at the expense of Pheroras. Archelaus's intervention was followed by Eurycles of Sparta's intrusion, which was more destructive of the positions of Alexander and Aristobulus ([Chapter 6](#)). The two parallel involvements in Judea's affairs, based on marital relationships, underscore the complications in intermarriages among *amici*. Regrettably, we have less detailed information than we would like to have about their consequences.

Rome's relationship with a dependent state typically lasted a generation or two, after which the dependent state was absorbed into the Roman provincial system. Sometimes Rome and the indigenous population benefitted from the rulers' longevity: Juba II and Archelaus each ruled about fifty-three years, Juba from 29 BCE to 24 CE, Archelaus from 36 BCE to 17 CE. Herod, the oldest of the three, reigned for thirty-seven years, from 40 to 4 BCE. At their respective deaths, Rome imposed different solutions: Cappadocia became a Roman province; Mauretania passed to Juba's successor Ptolemy, and then became a province in 40 CE; Judea was trifurcated, as Herod's final will proposed, but without any of the three heirs retaining the title king. Rome's choice would have been based on informed knowledge of local conditions, an understanding of Rome's possible courses of action, and Rome's evaluation of the potential future players. In many cases such evaluations were based on the claimants having spent lengthy periods in Rome under the watchful eye of Augustus himself.

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Princes and king

In Judea's case it might be expected that religious issues would be fraught with difficulties; though Rome was relatively tolerant, Judea was not. If the issue arose, both princes and king must have sublimated it.

First-hand information is lacking on Augustus's attitude toward Jews and Judaism; for example, there is no reference to Jews or Judea in the *Res gestae*. There are several second-hand accounts ([Chapter 6](#)), including Philo, who followed events later from Alexandria. Just after the passage quoted in [Chapter 4](#), Philo points out that Alexandrian Jews ignored Augustus for forty-three years; there were no dedications in their synagogues (*proseuchai*, "houses of prayer"). Philo turns the neglect on its ear, saying that Augustus maintained

firmly the native customs of each particular nation no less than of the Romans, and ... he received his honours not for destroying the institutions of some nations in vain self-exaltation, but in accordance with ... a sovereignty ... enhanced by such tributes.

Philo notes Augustus's "approval of the Jews, who . . . regarded all such things with horror" (*Legatio* 153–4). He emphasizes that Augustus knew the Jewish community and their houses of prayer in Rome (Richardson 2004, [chapter 7](#)); more importantly, in Jerusalem he "adorned our temple . . . and ordered that for all time continuous sacrifices of whole burnt offerings should be carried out every day at his own expense" (*Legatio* 155–8). Philo's interpretation is not correct at every point, but the fact that a Jew like Philo could maintain these views not long after Augustus's death—while the temple still stood and in a tense political climate in Alexandria—is testimony to Augustus's tolerance (Barclay 1996, 48–81).

The two sides of the relationship dovetailed. (1) Herod was dependent upon Rome in general and Augustus in particular, but he enjoyed enough independence to be able to follow Judaism's laws and customs as he wished. (2) Rome's leniency toward Judaism and Augustus's support of sacrifice in the temple meant Diaspora Jews also could practice their religion ([Chapter 6](#), re. decrees). (3) When Octavian received honors that pushed his new title *Augustus* to its limits, Herod might conceivably have sought exemption from participating in the ruler cult; instead, he was one of the first to construct new *sebasteia*. (4) Herod publicly gave visible evidence of a close relationship by naming important urban projects and individual buildings for members of the Imperial family. (5) Visits in both directions cemented the relationship: Herod made three or four visits to Rome; his children enjoyed extended educational periods in Rome during their teenaged years; Augustus made an Imperial visit to Judea on his way to and from Egypt; and perhaps most significantly, Marcus Agrippa undertook an extended trip through Herod's territory to inspect Herod's massive building projects.

After a slow start during the first few years, a warm working relationship between Augustus and Herod—if not an especially close personal relationship—survived intact for four decades, with few ups and downs. Herod did what he said at Rhodes he would do: he served Octavian faithfully and caused relatively few problems. Herod anchored Rome’s eastern policy, supplying troops when requested, keeping his region quiet, showing the loyalty required of clients, and maintaining open trade routes.

He showed his worth in foreign ventures first in 25/24 BCE when Aelius Gallus (a friend of Strabo’s—see *Geog.* 2.5.12—and prefect of Egypt) led a combined marine and overland expedition of 10,000 Roman soldiers into Arabia Felix, accompanied by auxiliary forces of 1,000 Nabateans (led by Syllaeus) and 500 Judean soldiers (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.4.21–4; *Ant.* 15.317). The expedition’s purposes were “to explore the tribes and the places, not only in Arabia but also in Aethiopia . . . [and to win] the Arabians over to himself or [to subjugate] them. Another consideration was the report . . . that they were very wealthy” (*Geog.* 16.4.22). In addition to reconnoitering the Arabian peninsula, somewhat beyond her customary interests, Rome wanted to control eastern trade routes through dominance of the Sabeans (modern Yemen) by leaping past Nabateans’ zone of influence. The purposes suited Herod’s interests in eastern trade, some of which already passed through Judean ports and more of which was destined soon to flow along the same routes toward Rome (Young 2001, [chapter 3](#)).

The campaign was a disaster, despite Strabo’s startling claim that only two persons died in one battle, only seven altogether from war, because the Sabeans were such poor fighters. The rest died from “sickness and fatigue and hunger and bad roads” (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.4.24; see also Cassius Dio 53.29); the sickness may have been sunstroke and scurvy. Many in the expedition died, so the bright face Augustus put on it—that the army “advanced . . . to the town of Meriba” (*Res gestae* 26)—may be strictly correct but conceals that there was neither long- nor short-term benefit. Strabo summarizes that “this expedition did not profit us to a great extent in our knowledge of those regions.” The failures were caused, he says, by Syllaeus, the Nabatean “administrator” (*epitropos*) under Obodas III, who misled and misguided the expedition, particularly the marine part. If Strabo’s account of Syllaeus’s treachery is even partially correct, it is a wonder Syllaeus was not executed on the spot; it is equally odd Herod considered him a candidate for his sister’s hand a few years later.

Strabo's invective against Syllaes is suspect. Aelius Gallus and Strabo were friends, so heaping the blame onto Syllaes helped salvage Gallus's reputation: "if Syllaes had not betrayed him, he would even have subdued the whole of Arabia Felix" (*Geog.* 17.1.53). No doubt the disaster was due partly to unforeseen and unfamiliar conditions (the heat of Yemen, the unknown waters of the Red Sea) and partly to limited planning. To judge from Strabo's neglect of Herod and from *Antiquities'* brevity, Herod probably stayed home. It was just as well he did, for the expedition lasted longer than expected, perhaps parts of two years. The affair ended dramatically in 6 BCE when Syllaes was executed in Rome, after overreaching himself in his dispute with Herod ([Chapter 6](#)).

Herod's friendship with Augustus deepened during his sons' educations. In the late-20s Mariamme's children, Alexander and Aristobulus—about fourteen and thirteen, an appropriate age for education in grammar—went to Rome "to present themselves to Caesar" (*Ant.* 15.342–3). According to Josephus the boys were proud of their Roman education (*War* 1.479; *Ant.* 16.203–4); they stayed first with Pollio and then with Augustus himself (as Suetonius indicated), who showed the greatest consideration. With which of two Pollio candidates has been debated: Asinius Pollio or Vedius Pollio (Cassius Dio 54.23). A preference for Vedius reflects the negative reputation of both Herod and Vedius: birds of a feather flock together. Feldman, however, argues that Asinius Pollio was interested in Judaism, was bookish and, after a public career (consul in 40 BCE when the Senate named Herod king), turned to a scholarly life, writing a history of the period. He was more likely to be their host, based on inclination and acquaintance with Herod (Feldman 1985; Braund 1983; Bowersock 1965, 55; Syme 1961). This was the first extended contact between the families of Augustus and Herod. Perhaps Augustus gave Herod the right to name his own successor (*Ant.* 15.344) because Herod's Hasmonean heirs were in Rome ([Chapter 12](#)). The brothers stayed five years; in 17 BCE Herod, irritated by their antagonism to him, went to Rome to bring them home (*Ant.* 16.90–130; *War* 1.445). A third son of Mariamme died in Rome, but no details are known.

Josephus ignores the education of Antipater, Herod's eldest son; he reappears in the narrative in about 13 BCE, when a trip to Rome is presented as his first visit—he was over thirty years old—designed to introduce him to Augustus. Doris's divorce and banishment in 42 BCE, when Antipater was still a small child, meant he was not sent to Rome for schooling. But other Herodian children were educated in Rome. Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip were treated generously by the Emperor, some being "brought up by a certain Jew" (*Ant.* 17.20); this is an

intriguing distinction from Alexander and Aristobulus being lodged with Pollio and Augustus himself, because we might have expected the Hasmonean descendants to have had Jewish lodgings in Rome. We have almost no information about the others' education in Rome, their contacts with Augustus's family, their friends, or their activities. The important point is that Augustus knew seven of Herod's sons (Alexander, Aristobulus, an unnamed son who died there, Archelaus, Antipas, Philip, and eventually Antipater) for some periods of time.

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At about this time Augustus added Trachonitis, Auranitis, and Batanea to Herod's kingdom. The background is that Zenodorus had been "Tetrarch and High Priest," according to coins, of some portion of the region: he took over part of Chalcis and later held some of the Huleh region (or leased them from Cleopatra), following Antony's execution of Lysanias at Cleopatra's request; these areas were part of the Iturean hegemony ([Chapters 2 and 9](#)). Zenodorus also controlled lands east and southeast of his main territory (Schürer 1973–87, 1.561–73, esp. 566; Myers 2010, 165–8), explaining Josephus's claims that Zenodorus wanted Trachonites to harry traders and inhabitants of Damascus using this route to the south (*War* 1.398–9; *Ant.* 15.343–8).

It is debatable who rid the area of the brigands: *War* 1.398–9 says it was M. Terrentius Varro, governor of Syria in 24–23 BCE, with which *Ant.* 15.345 partly agrees, saying Varro asked Augustus, who advised, "drive them out and give the area to Herod." But then Varro let Herod pacify the region and put a stop to the depredations after he had been granted the land (Cassius Dio 54.9). Following this reverse, Zenodorus hurried to Rome to complain of Herod's behavior, but got nowhere (*Ant.* 15.349). It seems likeliest that Varro and Herod acted together and that Augustus granted this troublesome area to Herod on condition that he assist Varro in pacifying it. Josephus is uncertain about the date; he puts it to a time "after the first Actiad" (*War* 1.398), or alternatively to his children's stay in Rome (*Ant.* 15.343); if Varro was involved it was in 24–23 BCE.

About the same time (23 BCE) Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa was named Augustus's successor, and a few years later his "deputy" for the east. He moved to Mytilene on the island of Lesbos (Cassius Dio 53–4) to assume a responsibility that continued until 13 BCE, though he did not remain in the east for the whole period (Cassius Dio 54.19). Herod paid his respects in Mytilene as soon as possible after Agrippa's appointment (ca. 23/22 BCE): "Herod . . . was one of [Agrippa's] closest friends and

companions” (*Ant.* 15.350). In what sounds like a gross exaggeration Josephus says (in *War*, following the account of Zenodorus), “what Herod valued more than all these privileges was that in Caesar’s affection he stood next after Agrippa, in Agrippa’s next after Caesar” (*War* 1.400; *Ant.* 15.361). A friendship between Agrippa and Herod was the more natural tie: both were rooted in the countryside, fabulously wealthy, ambitious patrons of public works, keen supporters of Augustus, and imaginative military commanders. Agrippa’s *proconsulare imperium* over the east threw them into close cooperation. Nevertheless, for Josephus to make Herod the third-ranking person in Rome’s power structure after Augustus and Agrippa is a rather remarkable elevation in Herod’s status. There is an air of unreality to the description, because Herod would not have compared well to Agrippa, Octavian’s lifelong friend and designated successor (Cassius Dio 53–4). He had, at Octavian’s order, divorced his second wife in 21 BCE to marry Augustus’s daughter Julia (on Agrippa, Powell 2014; Roddaz 1984; Signon 1978; Meyer 1965), and his importance was further enhanced when the couple produced potential successors for Augustus: Gaius, Lucius, and Agrippa Postumus.

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Josephus’s account of these relationships may derive from Nicolas of Damascus; in a surviving fragment of his *Universal History* Nicolas describes how in 16 or 15 BCE Julia arrived unexpectedly in Ilios (Troy), nearly drowning in a flash flood. Agrippa angrily fined the city 100,000 silver drachmae; the citizens begged Nicolas to ask Herod to intervene on their behalf, which he did successfully (*FGrH* 90 F 134; Sherk 1984, 98C).

Herod’s friendship with Agrippa stood him in good stead. When Gadarenes sent a delegation to Agrippa in Lesbos, shortly after Herod returned to Judea (22 BCE), to complain about the city’s position within Herod’s kingdom, Agrippa dismissed the complaint unheard and sent the delegation to Herod in chains. Herod let them off, attracting a comment that “he had . . . the reputation of being the most inexorable of all men toward those of his own people who sinned, but magnanimous in pardoning foreigners” (*Ant.* 15.356). The Gadara affair bubbled for a couple of years until Augustus made a state visit to Syria in Herod’s seventeenth year (20 BCE; Cassius Dio 54; *Ant.* 15.354). With the support of Zenodorus, who posed as their protector (*Ant.* 15.355), Gadarenes denounced Herod’s tyrannical rule, citing violence, pillage, and overthrowing temples (*Ant.* 15.357). When the Emperor dismissed the charges and gave parts of Iturea (Lake Huleh and Panias)

to Herod, some of the delegation committed suicide. In a later mark of esteem, Augustus gave Herod procuratorial responsibility in Syria, possibly only border regions (*Ant.* 15.360; *War* 1.399).

Herod generously obtained financial and political independence for Pheroras, despite rumors that his brother threatened his crown; Herod, of course, could not make such a decision himself, so he asked Augustus to carve off Perea for Pheroras (*Ant.* 15.362; *War* 1.483). He also had Pheroras marry Mariamme I's sister ([Chapter 12](#); *War* 1.483–5), continuing a pattern of endogamous relationships, a dim reflection of the way Augustus sought interconnected roles for family members, seen clearly in Julia's marriages (Goldsworthy 2014, 361–2, 379–80). With respect to Pheroras, Herod enhanced his financial security with a grant of 100 talents per year plus the income of Perea, while buttressing his position against Alexander and Aristobulus.

When Augustus visited Herod, it is likely he was entertained at Panias (Banias), near which Herod built a Temple to Roma and Augustus (Cassius Dio 54; *Ant.* 15.354, 363–4). From Panias, we may conjecture a royal procession to Sebaste with its Temple to Roma and Augustus, then a visit to Caesarea Maritima, with a Temple to Roma and Augustus under construction. Such a route would allow Herod to display sites honoring his patron. Little can be said of how he was entertained; apart from the Temple of Roma and Augustus at Panias, no memorials of the princes' trip to Herod's regions have survived.

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The picture of the relationships of Augustus, Agrippa, and Herod is grossly incomplete, surprisingly so given Josephus's reliance on Nicolas and Nicolas's knowledge of them. The impression of closeness, however, is certainly correct of Agrippa and Augustus, probably correct of Agrippa and Herod, but a little uncertain of Herod and Augustus, given the fact that Herod made only a few visits to Rome and Augustus made only one visit to Judea.

Internal matters

Other matters absorbed Herod's time and energy during this period. He continued to be troubled by family concerns, especially by his own marital status in the mid-20s. Mariamme I was dead, executed several years before. He had divorced his first wife Doris and dismissed her and her son from the palace years earlier; two of Herod's marriages, one to a

cousin and one to a niece, are impossible to place on a timeline and several others elicit different proposed dates (see discussion in [Chapter 12](#)).

Herod probably married Malthace, a Samaritan, about the time he began reconstruction of Sebaste and after his life-threatening illness. The marriage did nothing for his political or religious reputation in Judea and he had no pressing reason to court Samaritans, who had been generally supportive. Perhaps it was mutual attraction. Malthace was resilient, for she survived in a position of influence longer than any other of his wives, from 27 to 4 BCE. She died during the hearings in Rome after Herod's death, still active on her sons' behalf (two lists—*War* 1.562; *Ant.* 17.20—put her children in what seems the wrong order, since Archelaus was the eldest). Nothing is known of Cleopatra of Jerusalem (so-called to distinguish her from Herod's nemesis, Cleopatra VII of Egypt); she may have been a daughter of a Jerusalem noble, but if so one who accommodated his daughter's name to Egyptian customs. Since Herod had not divorced Malthace, he had multiple wives from this period on, though how many at any given time is conjecture. Another of his marriages, to a second Mariamme whose father was the priestly Simon son of Boethos from Alexandria, also indicates Egyptian concerns (*Ant.* 15.320, 17.19; *War* 1.562).

These three marriages—Malthace, Cleopatra of Jerusalem, and Mariamme II—were concurrent, all contracted in four or five years after 27 BCE. Nothing is known about marriages to Pallas, Phaedra, and Elpis, probably in this order (*War* 1.562; *Ant.* 17.19–21) in the years before and after 20 BCE. To complicate his life, Herod brought Doris and her son Antipater out of disgrace in 14 BCE (see [Chapter 6](#)), after having been divorced for more than twenty-five years. The tensions, in a household with multiple wives living together over a long period of time, with married children in the palace, and with several children struggling for precedence, can hardly be imagined, especially with Doris thrown back into the mix. Her return brought Antipater back into contention as a relatively unknown successor, a desperate expedient that could only have made a bad situation much worse.

Financial problems struck again in the late 20s BCE. Previously the combination of drought, famine, and plague had required Herculean efforts that drained Herod's finances. In this instance Josephus does not say that there was a famine, though this is sometimes deduced: "Herod remitted to the people of his kingdom a third part of their taxes, under

the pretext of letting them recover from a period of lack of crops" (*Ant.* 15.365, referring back to 15.354 and Augustus's visit): "the first recorded tax remission in the entire Roman empire had occurred . . . in 31 BCE, soon after Actium" (Ariel & Fontanille 2011, 13). Herod's tax relief may have followed from another sabbatical year (probably 23/22; see Introduction); with adequate rainfall there would ordinarily be sufficient grain to get through the lack of crops in the sabbatical year and the next year, so tax relief might be needed about 22/21. Several factors stand out in Josephus's account. (1) Herod was more concerned to win "the good will of those who were disaffected" than he was about crop failure. (2) "They resented his carrying out of such arrangements [remission of taxes?], as it seemed to them to mean the dissolution of their religion and the disappearance of their customs" [letting land lie fallow?]. (3) He remitted one-third of the taxes to alleviate the hardships. (4) Wealthier landowners were not affected in the same way as smallholders. (5) Herod "instruct[ed] them to apply themselves at all times to their work"; sabbatical years were popularly associated with idleness, as in Tacitus's comment: "We are told that the seventh day was set aside for rest because this marked the end of their toils. In course of time the seduction of idleness made them denote every seventh year to indolence as well" (Tacitus *Hist.* 5.4).

Remission of taxes was a different strategy from that adopted during the previous hardships, when Herod purchased grain in Egypt for general distribution. Though the measures were different, two factors were similar: an increase in state intervention in the economy, and an increase in benevolence and social welfare. Though Judea was hardly a welfare state, there was more economic interference than some wished to see.

Some of Herod's other actions went beyond Jewish law. He sought to remove injustices by acting harshly against malefactors, hinting at social dislocation both in town and country (*Ant.* 16.1). Housebreakers were to be sold into slavery and deported, a more severe penalty than Torah prescribed. Josephus says thieves were fined four times the amount stolen (Philo says twice; *Spec. leg.* 4.2); if the fine could not be paid a Jewish thief was to be sold to a fellow Israelite (so that he would be released in a sabbatical year). The new measure was thought tyrannous and it led to more dislike (*Ant.* 16.1–5). Josephus also mentions prohibition of meetings and of normal association, secret police, strict punishment, both secret and open incarceration in Hyrcania (Herod's most dreaded fortress), and executions (*Ant.* 15.366). In a statement that sounds as if it were lifted from Suetonius's account of Nero, Herod was rumored to go about in disguise to learn people's attitudes to him (15.367). He demanded an oath of loyalty to him and his rule (15.365;

Grant 1971, 204; Barnett 1974), with two groups, Essenes and followers of Pollion and Samaias, being excused (15.369–70; cf. *Ant.* 18.18–22; *War* 2.119–61). The oath’s purpose is not given, but in the east oaths were not unknown, as the following indicates:

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Of Imperator Caes[ar,] son of the god, Augustus the twelfth consulship, third year (of the province), on the day before the Nones of March in Gangra in [camp?], the oath completed by the inhabitants of [Pa]phlagonia [and the] R[omans] who do business among them: I swear by Zeus, Earth, Sun, and all the gods [and] goddesses, and Augus[t] us himself that I will be favorably disposed toward [Cae]sar Augustus and his children and descendants all the time of my [life] in word and deed and thought, Considering as friends those whom they may consider (friends) and holding as enemies those whom they may judge to be (enemies). ... In the same words was this oath sworn by all the [inhabitants of the land] in the temples of Augustus throughout the districts (of the province) by the altars [of Augustus].

(IGR 111.137; OGIS 532; ILS 8781: March 6, 3 BCE; Sherk 1984 # 105)

The intent, though not the wording, of a Judean oath may have been similar. It is unlikely an oath would be directed to Herod alone, and the point at which this incident falls in Josephus’s narrative may imply it was instituted when Augustus was in Judea. If so, it would have highlighted treaty relationships between Judea and Rome and given prominence to Augustus, with limited (but still explicit?) reference to Herod; and it may have been connected with the temples of Roma and Augustus. An oath fits well in this period when “religion” and “customs” were matters of controversy and exemptions from the oath were allowed to some on special religious grounds.

Alongside such quasi-religious issues as the oath, treatment of malefactors, and remission of taxes, we should place Herod’s most important building project. At about this time he began the complete reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem ([Chapter 9](#)). Josephus makes several claims bearing on Herod’s role: (1) the money came from his own pocket; (2) he was motivated by the popular acclaim that might accrue (*Ant.* 15.380 for both); (3) it was possible only because of Judea’s prosperity ([Chapter 10](#)); (4) sustained peace and harmonious relations with Rome were factors (*Ant.* 15.387); (5) for its piety and beauty the project outshone all Herod’s other projects at home and abroad (15.384); (6) his careful preparations reduced objections and ensured speedy conclusion of the essential parts of the work (15.388–90), so that the *naos* (the temple proper) was completed in one and a half years. Juxtaposing the descriptions of the oath and the temple gives a more complex picture of Herod at this stage: at the same time as he promoted

adhesion to Augustus by an oath, he also undertook a temple project that defined his attachment to Judaism. At the same time as he generously remitted taxes, he also showed a tough-on-crime approach to social problems, both of which were looked on with suspicion by conservative Judeans.

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An internal problem that would become a major external challenge stirred below the surface. Just before his death Zenodorus had sold Nabatea that portion of his territory known as Auranitis (Jebel Druze). Though Nabateans considered parts of this region theirs (Bostra [Bosra], Canatha [Qanawat], Suweida, Selaema [Suweilim] and Si'a all have early Nabatean remains), Augustus had given it to Herod in 23/22 BCE (*Ant.* 15.351–2). Nabatea tried several stratagems to get it back, both legal and military. The most unsettling aspect of this for Herod was that his soldiers with allotments there did not share the country's general prosperity and they shifted their support to Nabatea. Mindful of his obligations as a dependent king to keep peace internally and avoid foreign entanglements not sanctioned by the Emperor, he bided his time (*Ant.* 15.352–3).

To Rome

While Herod could have made more visits to Rome, only three are known certainly. His first visit was in 40 BCE, his second in 17 BCE, a third in 13/12 BCE, with a possible fourth trip of uncertain date ([Chapter 6](#)). It was a significant event when, in 17 BCE, Herod traveled to Rome to bring his sons home. Alexander and Aristobulus had been there five years to complete their schooling, so Augustus “permitted [Herod] to take them home” (*Ant.* 16.6). Possibly Herod took home the body of a third unnamed son who died in Rome. Josephus does not give any hints whether the boys were pleased or displeased to return home, nor is there much about their relationships with their father. What Josephus does suggest, however, is that others destabilized whatever the relations may have been.

When they arrived in Judea as mature young men of about nineteen and eighteen, there was great public interest. They were rich, royals, Hasmonians, intimates of the Imperial family, and educated in Rome (*Ant.* 16.7). But at home they upset the uneasy balance. Salome and her supporters feared they might come to power and take revenge for her part in the events that had led to Mariamme I's death. The rumor mill

turned; it was mooted that the boys were opposed to their father—not implausibly—for his part in Mariamme’s execution. Herod’s affection for the youths, perhaps never great, began to lessen (*War* 1.445–7). For a time it was a standoff.

Herod had arranged their marriages: Alexander to Glaphyra, daughter of his friend, King Archelaus of Cappadocia; Aristobulus to his cousin Berenice, the daughter of Herod’s sister Salome. These were the first marriages of his children, and Herod’s trip to Rome would have included obtaining Augustus’s permission. The one marriage may have had a good chance of success, for Glaphyra adopted Judaism and the couple had three children, an unknown daughter, another Alexander, and Tigranes IV (V) of Armenia. The other union, however, must have been extremely difficult, for Aristobulus’s new mother-in-law was the main accuser at his mother’s trial. Despite the tensions, Aristobulus and Berenice had five children, several of whom were important players in the dynasty ([Chapter 13](#)): (1) Herod of Chalcis, (2) Marcus Julius Herod Agrippa I, (3) another Aristobulus, (4) Herodias (married first to Philip, then to Antipas), and (5) another Mariamme.

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By 17 BCE Herod had extended the borders of Judea through Augustus’s various grants of land. He had re-shaped its political, social, and religious landscape to fit more comfortably into Rome’s Augustan world. He had produced a handful of children who could succeed him, with grandchildren arriving to continue the dynasty for another generation. He had established a close friendship with Marcus Agrippa and had a good working relationship with Augustus.

It looked as though his final years—he was now in his mid- to late fifties—would be calm and satisfying. But his last dozen years were anything but satisfying. On almost every front he faced changes and challenges; his health declined, his grasp of reality diminished, he lost his closest Roman colleague when Marcus Agrippa died, he lost the trust of Augustus for a period, his relations with his nearest neighbor turned sour, and worst of all, family relationships became fraught.

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6 From Rome to Jericho (17–4 BCE)

Augustus, Marcus Agrippa, and Herod

In the same year Herod was in Rome to bring Alexander and Aristobulus home (17 BCE), Augustus marked the tenth anniversary of the “restoration of the Republic” with the *ludi saeculares* (Goldsworthy 2014, 328–33); in 27 BCE he had been named princeps and had assumed the title Augustus (Schalit 1969, 554–62). In 16 BCE the office of princeps was extended for another five years; “then [Augustus] conferred upon Agrippa a number of privileges which were almost equal to his own, in particular the tribunician power for the same period” (Cassius Dio 54.12). But not everything was as rosy as it seemed: Augustus imagined plots against him, he wore a breastplate beneath his tunic in the Senate, and he eliminated a number of his opponents (Cassius Dio 54.15).

In several respects Herod and Augustus were alike. Both worried about their own safety and both took positive steps to improve things, such as law reform and distribution of grain (Cassius Dio 54.16; *War* 1.424). Another obvious similarity between Augustus and Herod was concern with succession. Both had children they could not or did not rely upon, Herod the children from his first two marriages, to Doris and Mariamme I, Augustus—who had no sons of his own—the stepsons from Livia’s previous marriage to Tiberius Claudius Nero. Such long-term questions continued to trouble them both for years.

Augustus involved friends and family members in major activities of the regime (Goldsworthy 2014, 334–54). He dispatched Agrippa to the east as his viceroy, while he and Tiberius went to Gaul; later he sent Tiberius and Drusus on an expedition to Germany (Cassius Dio 54.19). Though Augustus did not want Tiberius as heir, he willingly used his military skills; by contrast, he had complete confidence in Marcus Agrippa’s reliability and trustworthiness. The princeps was absent from

Rome for three years, Agrippa for almost five.

On learning that Agrippa was in the east, Herod went to meet him at Lesbos in 16/15 BCE. Either at this point, or perhaps a little later, the incident involving Julia's near death at Ilium (Troy) and Herod's intercession with Agrippa on behalf of the people of Ilium took place. Herod invited Agrippa to visit Judea (*Ant.* 16.12); when Agrippa arrived in 15 BCE Herod proudly showed off his new cities, Caesarea Maritima and Sebaste; he took him on a tour of his fortresses—especially Alexandreion, Herodium, and Hyrcania—and entertained him royally. They visited Jerusalem, where a massive workforce was turning the rebuilding of the temple into the largest and most dramatic religious structure in the Roman world. Agrippa paid for a sacrifice in the temple and offered a feast for the people, as Nicolas reminded Agrippa later in his speech in Ionia on behalf of Asian Jews (*Ant.* 16.31–57, especially 55–7). Herod also named one of its gates after Agrippa and renamed Anthedon, a rebuilt coastal town, Agrippias in his honor.

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Agrippa would have been impressed with the number of building projects completed or under construction, especially those dedicated to Augustus and the imperial family, of which he was an integral part. As a past commissioner of Rome's water supply, Agrippa would have been particularly interested in Herod's innovative water projects. Herod had a wide range of solutions, some of them unusual, at Jerusalem, Caesarea Maritima, Sebaste, Herodium, Jericho, Phaselis, Sepphoris, Alexandreion, Masada, Macherus, and Hyrcania ([Chapter 9](#) and [Table 9.1](#); see [Figures 8.3](#); [11.4](#); [11.5](#)); while he could not show all of them, the itinerary may have been planned to show off a few of the more interesting solutions to difficult water problems, for which Agrippa would have an instant appreciation. While Herod's technology was often borrowed—open and closed aqueducts, water collection techniques, water storage, syphon systems, sewage systems, and so on—the applications were specific to the climatic and geographical issues Herod faced, and some may have merged Roman and Nabatean techniques.

Herod was honored by Agrippa's visit and the evidence it provided of his closeness to the imperial family and his high stature in Rome's powerful elite. Agrippa in particular—Augustus's son-in-law, father of his adopted children, putative regent, and deputy in the eastern empire, and as a military commander on both sea and land—was a figure to be reckoned with. The combined retinues would have created a splendid show; they likely paused for spectacles at some theaters, stadia,

amphitheaters, and hippodromes Herod had begun to provide. The visit was still remembered glowingly two generations later, according to Philo (*Legatio* 294–8), when Herod’s grandson, Agrippa I, addressed M. Agrippa’s grandson, Caligula ([Chapter 13](#)).

As winter approached, the visit ended; Agrippa returned to Lesbos before the sailing season closed. He must have learned of troubles in the Black Sea region before leaving Judea, for he sought Herod’s assistance for a campaign in the Crimean (Cimmerian) Bosphorus—a Roman client kingdom—the next spring (14 BCE); Agrippa may have wanted Herod with him because there were significant Jewish communities in Crimea (*CIJ* 683–9; MacLennan 1996; Noy, Panayotov, & Bloedhorn 2004, section 11). He also dispatched Polemon, king of Pontus, to deal with the issues caused by Scribonius, a usurper whose new wife, Dynamis, was a daughter of a former king of Pontus. Scribonius was executed after local protests against his take-over (Cassius Dio 54.24). Polemon had supported Antony, fighting against Parthia in 40–39 BCE, but he lost part of Cilicia through Antony’s generosity to Cleopatra; though he had fought on Antony’s side at Actium, Octavian generously confirmed him in his kingship in 31 BCE.

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Herod set off with his new navy to assist Agrippa once the sailing season reopened (Shatzman 1991, 186–7). Though Judea historically had only a small navy—and until Caesarea Maritima’s harbor was finished, no place to shelter a large navy—Herod’s benefaction to Rhodes explicitly alludes to support for shipyards (*Ant.* 16.147) and commissioning ships for his navy ([Chapter 11](#)). One of Herod’s coin types highlights his navy ([Chapter 10](#)), which probably was minted to celebrate his expedition to the Black Sea. Herod hoped to catch up with Agrippa at Lesbos, but was delayed by contrary winds at Chios, time he used to win new friends and to make benefactions to repay Augustus’s loan to Chios. After restoring a damaged stoa, he carried on to the Hellespont and Byzantium, and finally joined Agrippa at Sinope in Pontus (see [Map 9.3](#)).

The Diaspora

Herod’s authoritarianism did not weigh on Diaspora Judaism in the same way it did on various sectors of Judean society (Perowne 1956, 95–102, 149–51; Schalit 1969, 424–50). The Diaspora was not much concerned with Judean policies, whether internal security or Rome’s

eastern policy or Herod's economic measures. It almost seems that tough internal measures matched generous external measures. Jews outside Judea had no reason to resent Herod and several reasons to be favorably disposed. They benefitted from Herod's closeness to Rome because they were engaged in a similar balancing act. Admittedly, we have little evidence of Herod's policy in the Diaspora (most is inferential), but what we have points toward Herod's reign as a time of prosperity for Diaspora Jews: he was "a Jewish king" who was also "friend of the Romans."

In the mid-first century BCE Josephus could say "there is not a people in the world which does not contain a portion of our race" (*War* 2.398; Smallwood 1981, [chapter 6](#); Williams 2013; Barclay 1999). A generation after Herod's death and a generation before Josephus wrote, Philo lists the following locations with Jewish communities: Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria, Pamphylia, Cilicia, Asia, Bithynia, Pontus, Thessaly, Boeotia, Macedonia, Aetolia, Attica, Argos, Corinth, the Peloponnese, Euboea, Cyprus, and Crete (*Legatio* 281–2). We can add Strabo's earlier and Tacitus's later literary evidence, and also Luke's list, repeating some of the same places as Philo but adding: Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Phrygia, Cyrene, Rome, and Arabia. Inscriptional evidence supports many of these and adds other locations, for example Malta, Aquitania, Moesia, and Lycia. Archaeological evidence for synagogues confirms Jewish communities at numerous locations such as Sardis, Kos, Delos, Aegina, Ostia, Stobi, and Dura, among others (see Runesson, Binder, & Olsson 2008). The combined evidence—literary, inscriptional, and archaeological—of vigorous Jewish communities outside Judea is strong and growing.

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In a departure from other Jewish communities, two communities in Egypt had sacrificial cult centers: the older—at Aswan on the island of Elephantine—had been home to a Jewish military colony. Aramaic papyri shed light on life in this outpost (Kraeling 1953; Porten et al. 1996), where a Jewish community, begun in the fifth century bce, was abandoned in the fourth century BCE. The other—at Leontopolis north of Cairo—hosted a reconstituted temple cult. It was built following the deposition of Onias III by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 174 BCE, and razed in 73 or 74 CE during the mopping-up after the Great Revolt (Binder 1999, 234–6; Richardson 2004, 165–79). These temples were untypical in offering sacrifices outside Israel; other Jews did not.

Jewish communities—served typically by synagogues, or in Egypt by

“houses of prayer”—claimed substantial privileges of self-government but usually avoided major differences from Jerusalem in practice and belief (Kasher 1985). They adapted linguistically to life in a foreign country, so in Alexandria they spoke Greek and translated Jewish scriptures and texts into Greek prior to Herod’s period.

Herod gave no evidence of interest in or support for Jews in Egypt. His long-standing problems with Cleopatra, resolved only by her suicide in 30 BCE, may have caused him to neglect Egypt, while its special status under the Emperor would have made him wary of dabbling in its affairs. There was no need to be especially concerned for Egyptian Jews; there was no sign of the later troubles under Caligula.

Nor was Herod preoccupied with Jews in North Africa or Spain or any of the Gauls. Herod had contacts with the Jewish community in Rome and was interested in Jews in Babylonia, but he gave his closest attention to Jews in the Greek Diaspora, especially Syria, Asia Minor, and the Greek islands, where there were Jewish communities facing problems in their relations with their local communities. These were also the areas where the spirit of Hellenism was rooted, Hellenistic architectural masterpieces were common, Hellenistic kingdoms flourished, and Hellenistic institutions were deployed—all of interest to Herod (Williams 2013; Lieu 1992; Rutgers 1998; Barclay 1996; Gruen 2002). These Jewish communities, like those in Egypt, spoke Greek and read the Bible in Greek. They may have focused their social and religious life around a local synagogue and maintained an attachment to Judea through payment of the half-shekel temple tax and occasional visits to Jerusalem, but they walked a tightrope, with their material wellbeing dependent on their fellow-citizens but their spiritual satisfaction connected with sacrificial worship carried out in Judea. It was no accident that Herod was interested in this part of the Jewish Diaspora, for their quality of life reflected upon his activities in Judea.

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There was more than one way to handle this. For example, the powerful Jewish community in Alexandria tended toward a sense of ambitious exclusiveness that contributed to the riots of 38 CE, whereas the influential community in Sardis was better integrated into the city center (Gaston 2005). Some Jewish communities, such as Sardis, occupied buildings in the city center, while others, such as Priene, had synagogues on the outskirts (Murray 2005). A few, like Sardis, may have announced their presence publicly, but most were indistinguishable from their neighbors (Richardson 2002).

Local misunderstandings and occasional hostility might emerge; these could be prompted by a concern that the Jerusalem temple drained money from the local economy, that Jews received special privileges—for example, exemption from military service—from Rome, and that Jews would not compromise over food market matters. Such factors sometimes resulted in an offensive anti-Judaism—almost anti-Semitism (Richardson 1986, 2006), evidence of which has been collected and discussed (Stern 1974, 1980, 1984; Sevenster 1975). The issue has attracted wide differences of opinion (Gager 1985), but it seems clear local Diaspora tensions were stamped down by Rome during Herod’s period.

A synagogue in Rome?

Even if Herod contributed to ameliorating conditions in the Hellenistic Diaspora, and despite Herod’s impressive record of construction projects in Judea and in places in the Diaspora where Judaism was strong, there is no literary record of construction projects in Italy or in Rome (Rutgers 1998) or synagogue projects elsewhere. There is, however, one tenuous and controversial piece of evidence from Rome, a fragmentary inscription that may refer to a synagogue of the Herodians (Leon 1960, 159–62; Richardson 2004, [chapter 7](#)). The surviving text of *CIJ* 173 reads:

.....]X X X
]GÕGËS
]RODIÕN
 ...]EULOGIAPASIN

Several readings have been proposed for the controversial third line; before the *rho* the vertical stroke of either an *êta* (*H*) or an *iota* (*I*) is visible. No reading answers all the epigraphic and textual problems; one proposal, worthy of more debate, is “synagogue of the Herodians” (*SYNAGÕGË TÕN HËRÕDIÕN*), though even if one were to accept this reconstruction, as we are inclined to do, it would not be clear whether this is a reference primarily to some (later?) group of Herodians ([Chapter 12](#)) or an allusion to Herod himself.

over a period of several centuries refer to twelve or thirteen synagogues in Rome, among which are three named after important persons: a synagogue of the Augustans or Augustesians (*CIJ* 284, 301, 338, 368, 416, 496); a synagogue of the Agrippans or Agrippesians (*CIJ* 365, 425, 503), and a synagogue of the Volumnians (*CIJ* 343, 402, 417, 523). These may allude to three first-century BCE persons: the Emperor Augustus, Marcus Agrippa, and Volumnius, procurator of Syria from 9 to 7 BCE (Frey 1970; Leon 1960; Noy 2005; Rutgers 1998). Though there are other possibilities, it is likeliest that these inscriptions attest local first-century BCE Jewish communities in Rome.

The reference to Volumnius is the most doubtful, and a few more words are necessary. Descriptions in Josephus imply that there may be two different persons, one a governor of Syria, the other a military tribune (for the former, *War* 1.538, 542; *Ant.* 16.277, 280, 283, 344, 399; for the latter *War* 1.535; *Ant.* 16.352, 354). Significantly, Josephus does not distinguish between two persons, with the references falling in close proximity; however, both may refer to the same person, a tribune who assists the governor of Syria in military matters, especially in connection with Herod's punitive expedition against Nabatea to slap down Syllaeus and force King Obodas to repay his loan. Volumnius participated in the decision to permit Herod to act; its aftermath led, on the one hand, to Augustus aborting his intention to give Herod control of Arabia and, on the other, to Herod settling 3,000 Idumeans in Trachonitis to keep the peace. Volumnius was friendly with Herod, later carrying Herod's letter to Augustus concerning his two sons, and subsequently was present at their trial in Berytus, urging a "pitiless sentence." Volumnius may have been remembered by Roman Jews for supporting Herod and Judea against Nabatea and pressing forward Herod's claims in Rome.

The several local communities attested in these inscriptions may be among the earliest synagogues in Rome, after the "synagogue of the Hebrews," the most natural name for a Diaspora synagogue (Richardson 2002). Naming these synagogues for four powerful figures would indicate a strong sense of obligation, but would Jews name synagogues after such dignitaries? Other instances of such "naming" elsewhere mean it was not unprecedented, as was the case in Egypt where houses of prayer acknowledge Ptolemy and Cleopatra (*CIJ* 2.1441, 2.1442, 2.1443) or Ptolemy and Berenice (*CIJ* 2.1440) or Ptolemy alone (*CIJ* 2.1449). The naming was not to attract monetary or other support but to indicate communal gratitude. Thus, returning to the question of Herodians, the matter should be evaluated from the standpoint of Rome's Jewish community, for whom naming a synagogue after Herod alongside three of his supportive friends may have been seen

by Roman Jews as unexceptional.

In a variant interpretation, Augustans, Agrippans, and Volumnians refer not to the person but to members of that person's household, as the alternate forms of the names, Augustesians and Agrippesians, might also suggest. In such a puzzle, one is left with a balance of probabilities. Frey has argued most tellingly for reconstructing the text and parsing the result to refer to a synagogue of the Herodians (Frey 1970, lxxii, 124–6; Momigliano 1932; Kraus 1922, 247–59; LaPiana 1927, 341–71). Recent opinion against this view, however, is weighty (Noy 2005; Rutgers 1998) and precludes too strong a claim for a synagogue named after Herod of Judea. Positively, we suggest that if the reading of the broken inscription is accepted, it fits with other evidence, such as Herod's constructive effect on the status of Jews in western Asia Minor and the Greek islands, and the policy of Jewish communities in Egypt. Herod's direct role in Rome was slight, but the Jewish community in Rome may have seen him as a beneficial figure worthy of recognition because of his impact on—and perhaps policy toward—the Diaspora.

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The decrees

Two other lines of evidence bear upon this picture: Roman decrees that safeguarded Diaspora conditions and Herod's interactions with the Diaspora. The decrees that survive were concentrated in the period before and during Herod's early influence and the communities involved were almost entirely in Asia Minor and the adjacent islands, the areas most significant to Herod. Josephus describes the decrees in two extended collections, *Ant.* 14.190–264 and 16.160–73, the former of which includes a summary:

Now there are many other such decrees passed by the Senate and the Imperators of the Romans, relating to Hyrcanus and our nation, as well as resolutions of cities and rescripts of provincial governors in reply to letters on the subjects of our rights. ... [W]e have furnished clear and visible proofs of our friendship with the Romans, indicating those decrees engraved on bronze pillars and tablets which remain to this day and will continue to remain in the Capitol.

(*Ant.* 14.265–6)

Most of the decrees responded to initiatives of Hyrcanus II, though the Pergamum decree against Antiochus is earlier than Hyrcanus II and several others not easily dated may also be outside his lifetime. For example, a decree of Julius Caesar from 44 BCE (*Ant.* 14.200) confirms

permission in 47 BCE to fortify Jerusalem, carried out by Herod's father Antipater. Through most of 64 to 40 BCE Hyrcanus II was dominant in Judea, with Antipater and Herod at his side, advising on or executing the regime's policies. Hyrcanus II, often viewed as weak, does not appear weak in these decrees. In the first decree cited by Josephus (*Ant.* 14.190–5) Hyrcanus II is “high priest and ethnarch of the Jews,” a brave, loyal, and zealous supporter of Caesar in the campaign against Mithridates; Rome guarantees Hyrcanus and his children the offices of high priest and ethnarch “for all time” and calls them “friend and ally” (*amicus et socius*), the same title Herod later had. Addressing Sidon, Julius Caesar says, “if . . . any question shall arise concerning the Jews’ manner of life, it is my pleasure that the decision shall rest with them” (i.e. Hyrcanus and his children). Marcus believes Josephus refers to “internal jurisdiction in Judaea,” which is possible, but in the context and light of similar decrees, it is likelier to refer to Jews of Sidon living according to their laws and customs. Hyrcanus seems to have rights over this nearby Jewish community, as also in the next decree (*Ant.* 14.196–8) addressed to Sidon, Tyre, and Ashkelon, which refers to Hyrcanus as “the protector of those Jews who are unjustly treated,” presumably in those cities.

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The decrees dealt with problems faced by Diaspora communities: (1) collecting and transmitting the half-shekel temple tax (14.227 [Asia-Ephesus], 214 [Delos], 251 [Pergamum]); (2) gathering produce for the tithe or first-fruits (14.203 [Sidon], 245 [Miletus], 250 [Pergamum]); (3) preserving Jewish communal meals and sacred rites (14.213–14 [Parium], 242 [Laodicea]); (4) observing the Sabbath (14.242 [Laodicea], 245 [Miletus], 258 [Halicarnassus], 263 [Ephesus]); (5) protecting places of assembly (14.258 [Halicarnassus], 260 [Sardis]) and residential quarters (Sardis again); (6) exempting Jews from military service (14.226 [Asia-Ephesus], 228 [Ephesus], 232 [Delos], 237 [decree of Lentulus]); (7) adjudicating civil suits (14.260 [Sardis]); (8) observing laws and customs and rites generally. In Syria, Asia Minor, and the Greek islands rights granted Jews were safeguarded both by decrees (copied in the Capitol in Rome) and by instructions to city councils about the need for tolerance. Similar decrees were posted in other places in the Levant (Sherk 1984, ## 95, 97, 100, 101, 102). Most of the decrees were promulgated under Julius Caesar, Augustus, and Marcus Agrippa.

A shorter collection of decrees is found in *Ant.* 16.160–73, prefaced a few paragraphs earlier by Nicolas’s speech before Agrippa on Herod’s

behalf. The picture is similar: the edicts deal with civic status (160), the temple tax (160–1, 163, 166, 167, 169, 171, 172), Sabbath observance (163, 168), violation of synagogues (164), and private concerns (160); the communities were Asia, Cyrene, Ephesus, and Sardis; the main player was Marcus Agrippa, again.

Suit of Ionian Jews

Against this background it is easy to appreciate Ionian Jews seeking Agrippa's support of their observances, exemption from Sabbath court appearances, security of the temple tax's transport, and exemption from military service and from some civic duties (*Ant.* 16.27–60). Nicolas of Damascus spoke on their behalf at Herod's direction (Grant 1971, 175–82). He reminded Agrippa that Jews used the seventh day to study their customs and laws, that money for the Jerusalem temple was often stolen, that taxes had been imposed on them, that they had been taken to court on holy days, and that such difficulties had been dealt with by decrees of the Senate recorded on tablets in the capitol. Agrippa granted all the requests, says Josephus (16.55), confirming their rights and customs, telling the defendants not to cause Rome trouble, emphasizing peace as Rome's motivation for its concessions.

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In the Ionian suit Nicolas referred to Herod as “our king,” commending him for support of Agrippa's house, for his honor and foresight and good faith, and emphasizing Herod's benefactions through the Diaspora. He mentioned Herod's father's assistance to Julius Caesar (*Ant.* 16.52) and their Roman citizenship (16.50–7; 14.127–37). Josephus underscores Herod's importance in the decision, claiming Agrippa granted all the Jews asked “because of Herod's good will and friendship” (16.60). Herod's service to Agrippa repeated Antipater's service to Julius Caesar; Josephus makes the relationships dovetail with the evidence of the various decrees and letters, so that Antipater's and Herod's constructive roles in the Diaspora—welcomed by both Caesar and Augustus—were visible to all observers. The Diaspora's advantageous position derived from the close ties between Caesar's and Herod's families.

The legal episode with Nicolas was a specific instance of the general picture, occurring toward the end of Marcus Agrippa's naval action, when Herod assisted Agrippa as adviser and friend in the Black Sea region in the spring of 14 BCE (*Ant.* 16.16–22). No details are given of

the land portion of the return trip through Paphlagonia, Cappadocia, and Greater Phrygia, to Ephesus, although the route would have taken them through some or all of Sinope, *Heraclea*, *Ancyra* (Ankara), Caesarea (Kayseri), Archelais, *Iconium* (Konya), Antiochia, *Apamea*, *Colosse*, Hierapolis (Pamukkale), *Laodicea*, *Tralles*, and Ephesus (Jewish communities are known in the italicized cities). They then visited Samos and Ilium, where Herod reconciled Agrippa to the Ilians (*Ant.* 16.26). Herod put in again at Chios (with a significant Jewish community), and paid the Chians' debt to Rome out of his own pocket, as if he were the Chians' patron. The Ionian suit before Agrippa occurred at this point. Afterwards, Agrippa left for Lesbos; Herod went to Samos before going back to Jerusalem. When he arrived home (*Ant.* 16.62) he convened an assembly to report on Jews in Asia and their future prospects; to show his beneficence, he remitted a quarter of his own people's taxes, possibly prompted by a sabbatical year in 16/15 BCE.

Herod bettered Diaspora Jews' conditions, occasionally directly—as with the Ionian Jews—but mostly indirectly through benefactions ([Chapter 10](#)). There is partial correlation between the areas benefitted and the known presence of Jewish communities, but we hear of no contributions to the Jewish communities themselves. When Herod claimed in Jerusalem that Jews in the Diaspora would be unmolested in the future, he did not suggest they would be better off physically or financially; his comment meant that imperial decrees (and his own generosity?) had improved their legal position. Herod's account of how Diaspora Jews were faring shows the Diaspora was part of his wider concern. When he ended his Jerusalem speech by remitting taxes (*Ant.* 16.62; cf. 15.365), it almost seems as if he were avoiding the suspicion of draining the country's finances. For Herod, benevolence in the Diaspora and remission of taxes in Judea were complementary acts of good rule.

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Benefactions

Given this picture of Herod and the Jewish Diaspora, it is strange there is no instance of a gift to a Diaspora community or of building a Diaspora synagogue (but note Gruen 2009, 13–27). His aim was more to improve attitudes of Greeks and Romans toward Jewish minorities than to improve Jewish communities materially ([Chapter 10](#)). Herod hoped to impress various Hellenistic communities with the open-handed and broad-minded concern of the Jewish homeland and its king.

Herod's strategy in Asia Minor and Greece was to assist cities financially: he repaid a loan and completed a stoa in Chios, he lightened taxes in several places (Gabba 1990; [Chapter 11](#)), he supported shipbuilding in Rhodes and rebuilt the Pythian Temple of Apollo, he endowed the Olympic Games—and may have helped repair the Temple of Zeus, damaged in an earthquake twenty or so years earlier—for which he was named President for life (*Ant.* 16.149; *War* 1.426–7), he paid for a gymnasiarch at Kos, he built “the greater part of the public buildings” at Nicopolis, near the site of Octavian's victory over Antony (Netzer 1987; Rocca 2008, 146–7; see Strabo *Geog.*, 10.2.2), and he supported work in Pergamum, Samos, Athens, and Sparta ([Chapter 9](#)).

In Syria Herod's pattern was more focused, or else Josephus simply knows more details. The gifts were almost all civic constructions. He built gymnasia in Ptolemais and Tripolis; halls, stoas, temples, and marketplaces in Tyre and in Berytus; a theater in Sidon; walls for Byblus; a gymnasium and theater in Damascus; a *cardo maximus* with colonnades in Antioch; an aqueduct in Laodicea-on-the-Sea; and in Balanea he lightened taxes ([Chapter 9](#) and [Map 9.3](#)). There were more gifts, since Josephus says he lists only the “greatest and most celebrated” (*Ant.* 16.146–9; *War* 1.422–8).

Self-aggrandizement is a partial but not sufficient explanation for Herod's generosity; the gifts, endowments, and benefactions testified to his political *savoir faire*. They worked in two complementary ways, shaping Judea's external relations with provinces and cities as well as improving relations between Jews in the Diaspora and their neighbors. Works benefitting local Jewish communities might exacerbate local tensions. Josephus claims in this context, “Caesar himself and Agrippa often remarked that the extent of Herod's realm was not equal to his magnanimity, for he deserved to be King of all Syria and Egypt” (*Ant.* 16.141).

The household

Herod's Black Sea trip fills an interlude in Josephus's narrative when Herod was dealing with matters of state; this section of material in *Antiquities* seldom overlaps with *War*. When attention returns to Herod's domestic problems, Josephus's two accounts come back into an uneasy parallelism, though *Antiquities*, as usual, is fuller. Chronological difficulties that resist solution occur commonly in the decade from 17 to 7 BCE. We think datable events can act as a framework into which other incidents are fitted as circumstances dictate, not always as Josephus has them; it appears Josephus complicates the household dissensions because

when he has several sources for an event, he keeps apart what he could have pulled together. What is clear is that intense family troubles occupied significant portions of the ten-year period.

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At different stages the problems focused on different players: Pheroras and Salome; Alexander and Aristobulus; Glaphyra; and Alexander and Aristobulus's supporters. One theme links the events: "dissension" (for example, *Ant.* 16.66, *stasis*; *War* 1.445, *orgē*). The dissension involved especially Alexander and Aristobulus, Mariamme I's sons now returned from Rome (17 BCE), and Salome and Pheroras, Herod's sister and brother. Dissension increased during Herod's various absences (*Ant.* 16.73).

Among the differences between *War* and *Antiquities* is that *War* has the problems focus on the youths' resentment of their father (they "eyed him as an enemy," *War* 1.445), whereas *Antiquities* makes Salome the key, trying to eliminate the youths as she had their mother. The boys were not blameless, but *Antiquities* has Salome, aided by Pheroras (who had previously played a modest role), take the initiative; in *Antiquities* Pheroras, in concert with Salome, manipulates the boys into a display of *lèse majesté* (*Ant.* 16.68–72). It is unnecessary to choose between the explanations of *War* and *Antiquities*; they fit together.

Since *War* 1.483–5 and *Ant.* 16.194–228 contain explicitly retrospective material, it may be that some of Pheroras and Salome's actions occurred prior to Herod's Black Sea trip. During this phase of family troubles Pheroras and Salome parted ways when Pheroras accused Salome of wanting to marry Syllaeus, ca. 15 bce, when Marcus Agrippa was in Jerusalem and probably visited by Syllaeus.

Pheroras's political heft had increased through his marriage to Mariamme I's sister, a union that complicated palace antagonisms. Despite his importance, he remains a shadowy figure (Kokkinos 1998, 164–76). He had weathered a crisis unscathed in 31/30 BCE when he was accused of an attempt to poison Herod (*War* 1.485–6; *Ant.* 16.198); he had become tetrarch of Perea in 20 BCE (*War* 1.483; *Ant.* 15.362); he had been pledged Herod's teenaged daughter Salampsio when Mariamme I's sister died (*War* 1.483). Then Pheroras, now in his sixties, offended Herod by rejecting his attempt to link the two branches of the family, deepening the offense by rejecting marriage with Cypros, another of Herod's daughters ([Chapter 12](#)).

Pheroras's refusals are hard to understand, given both the situation and marriage customs. Josephus's explanation is that Pheroras was in love with a slave (*War* 1.483; *Ant.* 16.194, 196), whom he married over Herod's objections (*War* 1.572, 578). He then resolved to divorce the slave and accept Herod's offer, swearing not to consort with her further. But then he abandoned his promise, falling back into the former relationship. Herod became suspicious of his brother (*War* 1.483–4; *Ant.* 16.194–5), making Pheroras easy prey for anyone who wanted to redress old scores (only *Ant.* 16.196–9). The fact was, since both Cypros and Salampsio were daughters of Mariamme I, Herod wished to establish Pheroras's children as Hasmoneans. Not only would this have appealed to some elements of popular opinion, it would have tied the disparate family branches together, and it would have put Pheroras's children in a preferential long-term position, on whom Herod or his successors might rely in the future. In this, Herod was acting in much the same way as Augustus was (Goldsworthy 2014, 356–62).

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Herod could not ignore renewed accusations against Pheroras—renewed, because years earlier Pheroras and Costobar, Salome's husband who had been executed in 28 BCE, had planned to flee to Parthia. Now the situation was getting dangerous again; Pheroras implicated his sister Salome, Herod's strongest supporter, in a plan that would pry her away from Herod and attach her to Nabatea (*War* 1.486–7; *Ant.* 16.200–28; Schalit 1969, 613–16; Kokkinos 1998, 182–4). Herod overlooked the problems Salome posed but not those posed by Pheroras.

Pheroras had waged a campaign against Herod's son Alexander for years; he stirred the pot afresh by telling Alexander that Herod was secretly in love with Glaphyra, Alexander's wife (*Ant.* 16.206). This may not have been impossible but it was improbable. The denouement, however, is difficult to understand: when Alexander confronted his father, the outraged Herod went to Pheroras, but instead of punishing Pheroras Herod promised him greater benefits. All rumors were believed, everyone was misunderstood, and love and hate were rampant. Josephus's account could be exaggerated, but behind it there may be truth to some accusations, counter-accusations, and tortuous defenses.

Pheroras told Herod it was all Salome's idea; she denied all charges and countered that everyone was jealous of her (*Ant.* 16.207–15). Herod had become antagonistic toward both Salome and Pheroras (*Ant.* 16.216–19). Just when we expect a dramatic next step, *Antiquities* has a lacuna between 16.218 and 219, followed by a summary of Salome's

character, which leads into the details of Salome's relationship with Syllaeus. It seems Syllaeus came to Jerusalem on some errand, met Salome, and fell in love; she reciprocated his feelings so Syllaeus asked Herod for her hand. Herod made circumcision—stated explicitly only in the Latin MS tradition (*Ant.* 16.225)—a condition of their marriage. For Syllaeus, becoming a Jew conflicted seriously with his ambitions with respect to the Nabatean throne, so he refused.

Dating this curious event is difficult. The claim that Syllaeus was a young man and a retrospective glance back to Costobar suggest it occurred early. It has been put in the mid-20s (Grant 1971, 141–4), in 20/19 (Perowne 1956, 153–4), but more plausibly it belongs after Herod's return from Rome in 17 BCE and before Nabatea's support of the Trachonite revolt. We propose that it occurred during Marcus Agrippa's Judean visit in 15 BCE, which Syllaeus would have wanted to take advantage of by making a friendly visit to Herod in Jerusalem, seeing Agrippa at the same time. Syllaeus was a force to be reckoned with in Levantine politics ([Chapter 5](#)). His relationship with Nabatea's King Obodas—"Obodas was inactive and sluggish by nature" (Al-Rawabdeh 2015)—allowed Syllaeus to take control (*Ant.* 16.220). The rest of Syllaeus's story must wait a bit.

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Pheroras and Salome insisted that Herod was in danger from his two sons, bent on revenging their mother, and that Archelaus of Cappadocia, Alexander's father-in-law, would help the boys make their case before Augustus (*Ant.* 16.73–4; *War* 1.447). Herod was supposedly perplexed over these accusations (so *Ant.* 16.75–7; differently in *War* 1.448). The paragraph goes on to contrast his "miraculous success as king" externally with "great tragedies at home." In any case, Herod's decision was uncharacteristically ambiguous: he reinstated his eldest son Antipater in the royal court in 14 BCE (*Ant.* 16.78; *War* 1.448) but hesitated over Alexander and Aristobulus.

Herod wanted Antipater to "serve as a bulwark against his other sons" (*War* 1.448), to "curb the recklessness of Mariamme's sons and warn them more effectively" by showing them "that the succession to the throne was not solely and necessarily their rightful due," while Antipater was a "standby" (*Ant.* 16.79–80; Schalit 1969, 588–606, 628–32). In some circumstances the ploy might have worked, but now it only added fuel to the flames. Alexander and Aristobulus thought Herod had dealt unfairly with them by allowing Antipater to undercut their positions. Antipater showed "remarkable adroitness" (*War* 1.450) in not

being seen to attack them while doing just that (*Ant.* 16.82–4).

As Alexander's and Aristobulus's situation disintegrated, Antipater's improved: "Eventually his influence was strong enough to bring back his mother to Mariamme's bed" (*War* 1.451; *Ant.* 16.85). Doris had been expelled from the royal court almost three decades earlier; nine women had shared Herod's marriage bed; seven had borne him children, while Doris's child had been ignored. With Doris back in the palace, mother and son saw an opportunity for revenge.

Herod's second will in 13 BCE ([Chapter 12](#)) formally named Antipater heir, excluding his half-brothers; he was given royal trappings (*War* 1.451; *Ant.* 16.86) and accompanied Herod to Ionia to say goodbye to Marcus Agrippa on the conclusion of his duties in the east, dated by Cassius Dio (54.28) to the consulship of Marcus Valerius [Messalla Barbatus Appianus] and Publius Sulpicius [Quirinius] in 12 BCE. Agrippa took Antipater with him to Rome, where Antipater presented himself to Augustus with Herod's new will; Antipater's first visit to Rome was alongside the empire's second most powerful leader.

In 13 BCE, then, at the advanced age of about thirty-two, Antipater's star shone more brightly than he could have imagined. He was ensconced again in his father's court, had out-maneuvered his two main rivals, gone to Rome to see the princeps in the company of Agrippa, and occupied sole place in Herod's latest will. Alexander and Aristobulus "were completely excluded from power" (*Ant.* 16.86). If *War* 1.451 is correct, Herod contemplated their execution, though this may be doubtful at this stage. In Rome Antipater "advanced in honour and bettered his position of preeminence," for Herod had recommended his son to friends there (*Ant.* 16.87). Antipater's Roman sojourn (about 13–12 BCE) was a turning point in his development (so *Antiquities*; differently in *War*), as he maliciously waged a letter campaign from Rome against Alexander and Aristobulus (16.88–9), achieving the desired effect on Herod's "anger and resentment."

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To Rome again

In 12 BCE Herod packed up Alexander and Aristobulus (*Ant.* 16.90–1; in *War* 1.452 Alexander alone), jumped on board ship and headed to Rome "in order not to make a mistake through carelessness or rashness." Augustus was in Aquileia (*Ant.* 16.91; or Rome, *War* 1.452);

the three appeared before him on an equal footing after Herod renounced his precedence. Herod accused his sons of planning patricide and treason “in the most barbarous manner” (*Ant.* 16.92; 15.343), stressing their un-filial behavior in plotting his death despite his generosity and restraint (*Ant.* 16.93–7).

The two young men faced serious problems in strategy and substance. For one thing, they were disadvantaged by the long connection between Herod and Augustus; for another, counter-accusations would merely confirm Herod’s accusations. Still, they had to mount a defense or they would be found guilty (succinctly but indirectly, *War* 1.452–4; extensively and directly, *Ant.* 16.100–20). In the latter, Alexander was hesitant; in the former, he was “an extremely able speaker,” thanks no doubt to his education in Rome a few years earlier. In *Antiquities* there is no mention of Antipater, though he was behind the allegations, while in *War* Alexander “bitterly complained of Antipater’s villainy.” Augustus’s sympathy swung to the brothers and reconciliation; he cleared them of the charges, instructed them to obey Herod, and told Herod to abandon his suspicions (*War* 1.454; *Ant.* 16.121–6).

Antipater had gone to Rome the previous year with Marcus Agrippa (contrast *Ant.* 16.273), so he was still in Rome. Indeed, on the conclusion of Augustus’s efforts, all four—father and three sons—left on the same ship. Josephus reports mind-boggling pretenses: Antipater seemed pleased, Alexander and Aristobulus seemed reconciled, Herod seemed to have forgotten their ill-will (*Ant.* 16.125–7). It was impossible for anyone to be content because the forced reconciliation made no essential difference in the spectacle of a father accusing his own children—children of his favored wife—of patricide.

In gratitude, Herod sent Augustus a gift of 300 talents for public spectacles and poor relief; in return he received the management of all the copper mines in Cyprus and half the revenue. Augustus confirmed Herod’s right to name his own successor (*Ant.* 16.127–9; *War* 1.455–6; cf. *Ant.* 16.92 and *War* 1.454), with the right to split the kingdom if he chose ([Chapter 12](#)), though Augustus refused permission “to give up control of either his kingdom or his sons during his lifetime” (*Ant.* 16.129). Josephus claims Herod wished to share the kingdom, an improbable hope given the recent accusations. As they traveled home they paused in Cilicia to be entertained by Alexander’s father-in-law, Archelaus of Cappadocia (*War* 1.456; *Ant.* 16.131).

The Nabatean War (12–9 BCE)

Josephus appears confused about Herod's difficulties with Nabatea and Syllaeus. The troubles on his eastern border came in two stages. In the first stage, before Herod returned from Rome in 12 BCE, there were troubles in Trachonitis (*Ant.* 16.130), the northeastern flank of Herod's territories. Revolt flared up in his absence, looked after by Herod's generals, but some of the revolt's leaders crossed the border into Nabatea, hoping to take advantage of Nabatean influence in Auranitis (16.271–81). Syllaeus encouraged their opposition to Herod, giving some a fortified place called Rhaëpta (location not known), from which raiding parties "pillaged Judea [and] also all of Coele-Syria." Raids from Nabatea continued for years (perhaps 12–9 BCE?), even while Herod took revenge against their Trachonite colleagues. The troubles were worse than Josephus admits, for he refers to Herod "surrounding" Trachonitis—a strange word to use when it was his own territory.

The second stage began in 9 BCE when Saturninus (as governor) and Volumnius (as military tribune) took office in Syria; Herod informed them of the raids and, quite properly, demanded the leaders' punishment. The new Roman officials were not ready to back Herod's cross-border venture. Herod increased the pressure by demanding that Obodas, old and in the waning days of his reign, repay his loan. Syllaeus, as chief administrator who was also angling to succeed Obodas, denied that Trachonites were in Nabatea and delayed the loan's repayment. A face-off before Saturninus and Volumnius led to a compromise between Herod and Syllaeus that the loan would be repaid quickly and that each would return the other's nationals. No Nabatean nationals were found in Herod's regions, though Trachonites were found in Syllaeus's. In external relations, of course, Herod could act only with the permission of Augustus or the Syrian governor, and in this instance the Roman authorities worked a compromise that revealed Nabatean subterfuge. Herod's Trachonite citizens in Nabatea may show that some parts of the population were restive under Herod.

In a bold counter-move, Syllaeus went to Rome to complain of Herod's actions and Saturninus's support of Herod (*Ant.* 16.282), pausing at the Temple of Apollo at Didyma near Miletus to leave a votive tablet to Jupiter Dusares "for the safety of King 'Aboud" (Obodas), as an inscription referring to "Syllaeus, the brother of the King" (Perowne 1956, 155) puts it. With Syllaeus in Rome, Herod could not intervene in Nabatea directly, but he got permission from Saturninus and Volumnius to attack Rhaëpta, possibly to reclaim fugitive subjects (*War* 1.474), reporting his success to those authorities. In Rome Syllaeus

exaggerated the devastation, grossly inflating the numbers killed from twenty-five to 2,500. Augustus was interested in one question: did Herod cross the border with his military? Augustus felt strongly about a cross-border incursion, since it occurred as he was dedicating the Ara Pacis, the “Altar of Peace” (Perowne 1956, 155), undercutting his claims to an unrivalled period of peace and security (Bowersock 1965, 56). Augustus angrily wrote Herod to tell him from now on he was not a friend (*amicus*) but a subject (*Ant.* 16.286–90) and he refused to hear his embassy when Herod appealed (*Ant.* 16.293).

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In the meantime, Obodas died, to be succeeded—without Augustus’s permission—by Aretas IV, though it is unclear when Nabatea needed Rome’s approval on royal succession. Augustus was likely being influenced against Aretas by Syllaeus, quietly working behind the scenes in Rome. With his position in jeopardy, Aretas countered by accusing Syllaeus of poisoning Obodas, assuming royal power, seducing others’ wives (cf. Strabo, *Geog.* 16.4.25–6), and borrowing money to finance his attempt on the throne. Augustus did nothing.

About the same time (11 or 10 BCE), Herod settled 3,000 Idumeans in Trachonitis—presumably veterans owed land grants—to ensure peace. In short order the Trachonites rose against them, Nabatea continued to refuse to give over the remaining brigands or repay the money owed Herod, and Syllaeus won Augustus’s confidence in Rome (*Ant.* 16.291–4). The poker game continued, as Herod created the town of Bathyra (perhaps As-Sanamayn, north of Dara’a) on the border between Batanea and Trachonitis, settling 500 Babylonian Jewish cavalry there together with another hundred kinsmen under the leadership of Zamaris (Applebaum 1989, 47–65). Zamaris and his cavalry had been given temporary places near Antioch, but Herod’s better offer included land, freedom from taxation, exemption from tribute, and no further obligations. He aimed to create a defensive bulwark (*problēma*) against Trachonitis, keep brigands at bay, and protect Babylonian pilgrims heading for Jerusalem. He also wanted to attract new settlers—people “devoted to the ancestral customs” (*Ant.* 17.26); its freedom from taxation, however, lasted only as long as Herod lived, since it was taxed later (*Ant.* 17.27–31; *Life* 46–61, 177–80, 407–9; *War* 2.421; Applebaum 1989, 37–65). Other texts suggest this was a Babylonian community (*War* 2.461–5; *Life* 55–61).

Herod was now an old man; this period was a low point for him. He was at odds with Nabatea, had lost Augustus’s confidence, and faced

heightened difficulties with his children. At about this juncture Herod sent Nicolas to Rome to act for him, probably with respect to all three difficulties.

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In Jerusalem

Dealing with Syllaeus and Trachonitis required running ahead of Herod's own story. Picking up the main thread, we return to Herod's arrival in Jerusalem with his three sons late in 12 BCE. He convened a council of all the people in the temple to explain what had happened in Rome. Collectively they put the best face they could on their strained relationship as Herod gave thanks, then admonished his children and his courtiers (*War* 1.457; *Ant.* 16.132–3), and then declared publicly the content of his third will, intended to bring reconciliation by naming three sons as successors, “kings,” with Antipater having precedence by virtue of age and position (*War* 1.458–65; *Ant.* 16.133; [Chapter 12](#)). He warned everyone not to discount him because of his age, or to fawn over his children, and he maintained the right to name their “advisers and attendants” (*War* 1.460).

Herod celebrated the completion of the construction of Caesarea Maritima and its splendid harbor with quadrennial games in the tenth year of work and the twenty-eighth year of Herod's reign, according to Josephus (*Ant.* 16.136; from 40 BCE = 13/12, from 37 = 10/9). Josephus also refers to the 192nd Olympiad, which would have begun in 12 BCE, and at 15.341 he mentions twelve years of work (Schwartz 1998). We suggest construction began in 22 BCE, took about ten years, and was finished in about 12 BCE. Livia sent some of her best treasures from Rome; envoys came from cities Herod had endowed; spectacles and feasts were laid on. The new city's magnificence made Judea a major player in countries ringing the Mediterranean—a role it had not been able to play before. From now on Judea would take its place among the nations of the world, especially through its new trade opportunities. It is doubtful that anyone then alive had seen such a massive new city built virtually from scratch in a decade, with the potential to influence the fortunes of the country.

Hoping to replenish his coffers, Herod broke open the tombs of David and Solomon, having heard that Hyrcanus I, a century earlier, had taken 3,000 talents of silver and had left more behind. After finding no money, he took some “ornaments,” but was deterred from further exploration

by the divine punishment of two assistants. To propitiate, he built a new marble memorial at the mouth of the tombs to honor his two famous predecessors (*Ant.* 16.179–83); no remains have yet been found (Shanks 1994, 38–51).

The fractiousness of Herod's household increased (*Ant.* 16.188): Alexander and Aristobulus's resentments and Antipater's manipulations did not abate. The accounts, however, are less than fully dependable; although *Ant.* 16.188–205 parallels *War* 1.467–84, the preceding section in *Ant.* 16.127–87 is full of awkward transitions in the narrative flow. Comparison of the parallels underscores what Josephus says: that he deliberately balances the diverse sources he uses (*Ant.* 16.185–9). This section of *Antiquities* is a patchwork.

The two brothers' supposed friends (in Josephus's view, "traitors") reported the brothers' words to Antipater, with exaggerated accounts finding their way to Herod. Antipater kept his own thoughts and actions sufficiently discreet that they could be described as a "mystery of iniquity" (*War* 1.470). As Antipater pretended to defend his two younger half-brothers, he subtly confirmed whispered accounts of their words and thoughts, looking blameless while the king got more suspicious (*War* 1.467–72; *Ant.* 16.188–90); the dissension in the palace was "like a civil war." In a relatively short period, Antipater had insinuated himself into the most powerful position in the family.

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Salome and Pheroras supported Antipater, as did Ptolemy, the king's chief financial officer and trusted friend,¹ and needless to say Doris also, who conspired against her stepsons. Glaphyra, Alexander's wife, exacerbated matters by disdaining everyone in Herod's family and by claiming she was the only true "royal." She worsened the inexorable flow of support away from Alexander and Aristobulus and almost succeeded in uniting the opposition (*War* 1.473–7; *Ant.* 16.191–3), with the result that the palace was split more or less along party lines.

It is obvious that much of Glaphyra's attitude stemmed from being a daughter of the Cappadocian king. She appeared to feel royal superiority, although according to *Ant.* 16.193 her actions flowed from love of her husband. Her venom was aimed especially at Salome's daughter Berenice, who was married to Glaphyra's husband's brother, Aristobulus. In such convoluted family relationships it is difficult to see how Alexander and Aristobulus could have had close fraternal ties when their wives were at war. It is even more difficult to understand why

Salome plotted the young men's downfall when her own daughter would inevitably fall with them. According to *War* 1.478–80 (see *Ant.* 16.203–4), the main problem was that Aristobulus was jealous that Glaphyra was a princess when his wife Berenice was a commoner. A sexual twist is added in *Ant.* 16.201: Salome persuaded Berenice to withhold sexual relations from Aristobulus.

If, as suggested below, Herod sailed again to Rome, this would have been a brief visit. It could have been associated with stopping on the way to or from the Olympic Games, for Herod was made President at the games, probably in 8 BCE, though the date is uncertain. By this date Augustus had ended his absence from Rome because of grief over the death of Drusus in 9 BCE and was on his way later in 8 BCE to campaign with Tiberius against the Germans (Cassius Dio 55–6). A possible visit could also have had to do with obsequies connected with Drusus's death or with the fourth anniversary of Marcus Agrippa's funeral, commemorated by gladiatorial contests in which everyone present wore black. Dio says Agrippa was commemorated in the year that Tiberius and Piso were consuls (Cassius Dio 55.8; 7 BCE?). Whatever the explanation of Herod's absence, Pheroras and Salome—who had patched up their quarrel—used the time to isolate Alexander and Aristobulus, as had happened during Herod's previous absence in Rome (*War* 1.483).

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Archelaus, Eurycles, and Eunuchs

The household tragedy continued to unfold in Jerusalem. Josephus has increased references to evidence obtained under torture, making his account tainted as much by the purported base on which it rests as by his authorial perspective. Three trusted eunuchs in Herod's entourage were accused of, and confessed to, sexual relations with Alexander. Under torture "to please Antipater" the eunuchs quoted Alexander as saying his father was an old man who dyed his hair black to appear young, adding that Alexander already had leading men, some of them generals, on his side (*War* 1.488–91; *Ant.* 16.229–34).

Herod instituted a reign of terror in which charges and counter-charges crisscrossed and no one was immune. In his near-paranoia (*War* 1.492–4; *Ant.* 16.235–40) Herod withdrew, leaving him at the mercy of family members' grievances. Chief was Antipater, who spread more rumors about Alexander. When Herod submitted Alexander's friends to

torture, he took denial to be an affirmation of loyalty to Alexander and thus of the charges' truth (*War* 1.493–5; *Ant.* 16.241–6). One friend under torture said Alexander pretended to be shorter and a less skilled hunter than his father; he claimed Alexander and Aristobulus were planning to assassinate Herod in a hunting “accident,” then go to Rome to seek Augustus’s confirmation (*War* 1.496 calls it a falsehood; *Ant.* 16.247–9). A search for evidence turned up only a letter from Aristobulus to Alexander complaining about Antipater’s responsibilities and income (16.250).

Nevertheless, this confirmed Herod’s suspicions about Alexander, so he was arrested (*War* 1.496; *Ant.* 16.251). In rational moments Herod thought his son was not guilty, but he continued to seek evidence by torturing Alexander’s confidants. In one reported plan, Alexander’s Roman friends would get Augustus to summon Alexander to Rome; Alexander could then accuse Herod of secret dealings with Parthia. In another plan, Alexander had poison ready for use (*Ant.* 16.251–3). In a bizarre episode, Alexander wrote “four books” in which he admitted to a conspiracy, implicating Pheroras and Salome and accusing Salome of forcing him to have sex with her (*Ant.* 16.256), prompting Herod to sink more deeply into his tormented imagination (*Ant.* 16.257–60). For his part, Josephus excuses Alexander’s actions on rather flimsy grounds: “perverse pride,” “to punish his father’s rashness,” “to shame Herod,” “to injure the kingdom” (*Ant.* 16.255), “to confront the perils,” and to attack “his enemies” (*War* 1.498).

At this stage (about 10 BCE) a voice of sanity appeared in the person of Alexander’s father-in-law, Archelaus of Cappadocia, pretending indignation by saying he intended to execute his daughter and son-in-law if Herod had not already done so. He reproached Herod for being too lenient toward Alexander, but gradually shifted blame onto Pheroras and others, using Alexander’s four books. Archelaus argued that Alexander had no reason to act against Herod since he expected to succeed him (*War* 1.499–503; *Ant.* 16.261–66). This left Pheroras high and dry; he had manipulated—or seemed to manipulate—Alexander into opposing his father. Archelaus of Cappadocia, playing the reconciler, maneuvered Pheroras into confessing his guilt and seeking Herod’s forgiveness. As Archelaus urged healing and reconciliation (*War* 1.504–7; *Ant.* 16.267–9), he also argued for Alexander’s divorce from Glaphyra; at this point Herod swung around and insisted the marriage be maintained (*War* 1.508–9). Archelaus achieved his goals brilliantly by playing on Herod’s changeable nature, and he returned to Cappadocia with rich presents, more eunuchs, and a concubine named “all night” (*pannychis*). Herod and his court escorted Archelaus as far as Antioch (*Ant.* 16.511–12; *War* 1.269–70), where Herod reconciled him with the

governor, Marcus Titius. This allusion helps in the dating, for his term of office began in 13 BCE and lasted until 9 BCE or a little earlier, providing a *terminus ante quem* for this phase of Herod's family troubles (12–10 BCE is about right).

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Archelaus wrote a report for Augustus recommending that “he” (Herod? Alexander?) go to Rome (*War* 1.510). Thackeray may be correct that “he” may refer to Herod, though it more naturally refers to Alexander, the object of the previous clause. The wording in *Ant.* 16.270 is just as ambiguous, so it is impossible to reconstruct events precisely. Josephus carelessly connects an explicit trip to Rome in the next sentence (*Ant.* 16.271) with a hint that Herod went to Rome, which can only refer to his earlier trip in 12 (cf. *Ant.* 16.130). It is not clear whether anyone went to Rome as a result of this conversation; if Herod did, it must have been in about 8 BCE.

In a parallel scene, Eurycles of Sparta, acting with opaque motives, undid the reconciliation, with destructive effect. Gaius Julius Eurycles had fought at Actium beside Octavian, as a result becoming a Roman citizen and ruler of Sparta. Herod knew Eurycles (possibly from a visit to Olympia?), but Eurycles had also become a friend of Antipater and a supposed friend of Alexander and Aristobulus, intending, says Josephus, to bring about the latter's deaths. Eurycles presented Alexander as a potential patricide and praised Antipater as a loyal son. When he left, he had done his damage. Augustus later banished Eurycles, in about 2 BCE (Bowersock 1961; Bowersock 1984, 169–88; Schalit 1969, 616–20).

The two brothers were accused of suborning the military leaders (*Ant.* 16.317–19). In his defense, Alexander claimed that Herod's secretary had forged a letter to the commander of Alexandreion over Alexander's signature. The secretary was ultimately executed (Josephus refrains from saying Alexander was not guilty). There were also accusations concerning two of Herod's military personnel, Jucundus and Tyrannus (in *War* 1.527 commanders of the king's cavalry; in *Ant.* 16.314 bodyguards); the details (*Ant.* 16.315–16) duplicate the earlier feigned hunting accident. About the same time Euarestus of Kos, a friend of Alexander's, spoke up for his friend, though his role and why he was in Judea are fuzzy (*War* 1.532–3; *Ant.* 16.312).

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Herod arrested Alexander and Aristobulus (*Ant.* 16.320–1); when Aristobulus threatened Salome over Syllaeus, his house arrest became chains (16.322–4). Salome was still attracted to Syllaeus, despite Judean conflict with Nabatea, so the accusation that Salome “betrayed to [Syllaeus] all the things that were happening here” was very damaging (*Ant.* 16.322). Coincidentally Glaphyra was implicated in a scheme to flee to Cappadocia and ultimately to Rome (*Ant.* 16.325–34; *War* 1.534–5). The situation was sufficiently delicate that Volumnius, legate of Syria, and Olympus, a friend of Herod’s, went to Rome to report the latest steps in the saga (7 BCE), stopping to warn Archelaus of Cappadocia of the danger his daughter faced. Volumnius’s involvement may suggest continuing military problems between Herod and Nabatea, to which Volumnius could speak directly; Olympus apparently carried Herod’s requests concerning his children (*War* 1.535–6; *Ant.* 16.332–34).

The execution of Alexander and Aristobulus

The messengers learned in Rome that Nicolas had made peace between Herod and Augustus, undermined Syllaeus by exploiting the Nabatean delegation’s dissensions, and documented Syllaeus’s treachery (*Ant.* 16.335–8). A hearing before Augustus pitted Syllaeus, Nicolas, and representatives of Aretas against each other, with Nicolas accusing Syllaeus of causing the deaths of Obodas III (30–9 BCE) and his friends, borrowing money for illegal uses, committing adultery with Nabatean and Roman women, and deceiving Augustus (16.339–40). When Augustus raised matters such as Herod’s invasion of Nabatea, Nicolas had an opening to defend Herod. He noted Herod’s loan to Syllaeus, his unsuccessful attempts to recover the money even with Volumnius’s and Saturninus’s help, and Roman approval of his minor action against Nabatea over the Trachonites’ revolt (16.341–50). Syllaeus’s defense crumbled; Augustus condemned him to death, first sending him back to face his creditors. Josephus’s brief summary may be garbled, however, for it appears Syllaeus returned to Nabatea; given his subsequent role in the story (below), it is unlikely he was condemned to death. Still, Strabo says he was beheaded and implies this took place in Rome (*Geog.* 16.782).

Augustus and Herod were back on better terms. Augustus even considered ceding Nabatea to Herod instead of awarding it to Aretas, but he changed his mind when Olympus and Volumnius gave him Herod’s letters about his sons. The letters revealed the extent of the family’s dysfunction and Herod’s inability to handle new responsibilities, especially controversial ones. Instead, Augustus confirmed Aretas IV as

ruler of Nabatea (*Ant.* 16.351–5), as it turned out an excellent choice in the light of Aretas's long and brilliant reign, which secured Nabatea's quasi-independence for another century. Obviously Rome was deeply involved in Nabatean affairs long before its annexation in 106 CE.

Rather than interfering in Herod's decisions about his children, Augustus advised that if the youths had been planning to assassinate Herod, he should punish them, but if they had only been planning to flee, as they maintained, he should merely admonish them. He told Herod to convene a council in Berytus—a center of Roman culture and law (Millar 1993, 274–85, 527–8)—including Saturninus (governor of Syria), Archelaus of Cappadocia (16.356–60), Pedamius (legate), Salome, Pheroras, the Syrian aristocracy (except for Archelaus), and some of Herod's friends, with Saturninus presiding (*War* 1.538). Alexander and Aristobulus were not allowed to be present (Schalit 1969, 620–8).

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Herod led for the prosecution, exaggerating the evidence of their letters (*Ant.* 16.362–6; *War* 1.540). Saturninus thought them guilty, but not of a capital offense; Volumnius argued for a harsh sentence, with others following Volumnius's lead (*War* 1.541–2; *Ant.* 16.369). The council's decision was advisory only, so Herod could be as severe or lenient he wished. Herod moved on to Tyre where he met Nicolas returning from Rome (*Ant.* 16.370–2; *War* 1.543) with Rome's opinion that Herod should merely imprison the youths. On reaching Caesarea Maritima, Herod's barber and an old soldier whose son knew Alexander and Aristobulus tried to intervene; they and others suspected of siding with the brothers were stoned to death (*War* 1.544–50; *Ant.* 16.373–93). Once again Herod called an assembly (*War* 1.550); the outcome was that Alexander and Aristobulus were taken to Sebaste and strangled, then buried at Alexandreion (*War* 1.551; *Ant.* 16.394).

The protracted affair of Mariamme I's two sons—the last of the Hasmoneans—was finally over. Their executions, whatever their guilt, went far beyond Herod's need for security. It was a cold-blooded decision that Herod had considered for years and only now felt appropriate, despite the advice of more reasonable persons. His decision strikes us as repulsive, for he had little to fear from his sons. Augustus would never have allowed a patricide to succeed to the throne; it would be too blatant a threat to the peace and stability he sought. Herod was secure, and his ability to name a successor allowed him to stymie effectively undue ambition. A usurper could hardly have dislodged him.

To what extent Augustus's hesitancy in Herod's children's fate was shaped by his own experience with his putative heirs is a matter for debate.

Antipater's end

The primary beneficiary of the executions of Alexander and Aristobulus was Antipater, though Salome and Pheroras also weathered the suspicions against them. Antipater was now Herod's best possibility as successor, the only one of an appropriate age—about the same age as Tiberius—and virtual co-ruler with Herod. The military, however, opposed Antipater, and the people, who thought the recent executions were largely his doing, hated him. Antipater shielded himself from rivals (*War* 1.552; *Ant.* 17.1–4) by trying to buy Pheroras's support, sending presents to friends in Rome, and showering gifts on Saturninus and his staff in Syria (*War* 1.553–5; *Ant.* 17.6).

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Herod, at sixty-eight or sixty-nine years of age, had a large, complex, and warring family. Several of his other sons were teenagers, and he also had young grandsons, two by Alexander and Glaphyra and three by Aristobulus and Berenice. He needed to put his house in order if it were to survive. He had nine wives living in the palace, according to Josephus, and twelve children still living (of fifteen), seven sons and five daughters (*War* 1.562–3; *Ant.* 17.19–22; [Chapter 12](#)). Herod's actions show his view of family matters: (1) he sent Glaphyra, Alexander's widow, with her dowry back to her father in Cappadocia; (2) he arranged for Berenice, Aristobulus's widow, to marry Theudion, Antipater's mother's brother; (3) he pushed Salome, over her objections, to marry Alexas (Kokkinos 1998, 185–92), with the support of the Empress Livia; (4) he provided for the upbringing of the seven children of Alexander and Aristobulus; (5) he promised Pheroras's daughter to Tigranes; (6) he betrothed another Mariamme (daughter of Aristobulus) to Antipater's son; (7) he betrothed Herodias (another daughter of Aristobulus) to his own son, another Herod; (8) he had one of Salome's daughters marry Alexas's son. The goal of these decisions was to enhance interdependence through interlocking marriages within the family (not unlike Augustus's decisions at about the same time), hoping to reduce internecine strife and secure the succession (*War* 1.552–3, 556–8; *Ant.* 17.12–15). Antipater was worried about Pheroras's status and Archelaus of Cappadocia's interference, yet he was influential enough to alter some

of Herod's arrangements, including to be married to Mariamme (6, above), the daughter of Aristobulus (*Ant.* 17.16–18; *War* 1.559–62).

With Herod's mental state disintegrating, Antipater and Pheroras formed an alliance (*War* 1.567; *Ant.* 17.32–3), to which four women were party: Pheroras's wife, mother, sister, and Doris, Antipater's mother, a "gang of four" who behaved arrogantly toward Herod's younger daughters. Through much of the household troubles Salome and Pheroras had been allies; now, faced with Antipater's improved stature, Salome turned against Pheroras (*War* 1.568–70; *Ant.* 17.34–40).

Pharisees came on the scene to play a role in these tensions. The four women, Josephus claims, were influenced by Pharisees to oppose Herod ([Chapter 11](#)). On a previous occasion Pheroras's first wife had paid a fine levied on Pharisees; Pheroras's second wife likewise conspired with the Pharisees. Josephus is imprecise about Pheroras's wife, who at this point must be not Alexander's daughter but the ex-slave (unless this is a duplicate account). It is odd she was in the vanguard in these events and unexpected for Pharisees to predict royal power accruing to Pheroras and his family (*Ant.* 17.43; Kokkinos 1998, 173). Curiously, Doris participated in discussions about the fine, but Herod ordered Antipater to end all connection with this group (*War* 1.572). He may even have executed some secondary figures who followed Pharisaic beliefs (*Ant.* 17.44–5). Herod dealt with Pheroras's wife in a council; he urged Pheroras to divorce her and ordered her not to meet Doris. Nevertheless, Pheroras and Antipater continued plotting, despite a rumor that Antipater and Pheroras's wife were lovers (*Ant.* 17.41–51; *War* 1.571–2). Antipater's position was becoming tenuous, with Herod, Mariamme II's son, designated as his successor.

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In these threatening circumstances Antipater arranged to be invited to Rome (ca. 6 BCE) to see Augustus and participate in the hearings against Syllaes (*War* 1.573; *Ant.* 17.52–3). Josephus says Syllaes had gone to Rome after a period of freedom, following the previous case against him led by Nicolas, though he does not clarify why Syllaes would go back to Rome to carry on his action against Herod if Augustus had already decided on Syllaes's death (*War* 1.574; *Ant.* 17.54). Whatever the explanation, Syllaes faced multiple accusations on several fronts: by Antipater (now in Rome) on charges similar to those pressed earlier by Nicolas; by Aretas IV (in Petra) on grounds of unlawful executions; by Herod (in Jerusalem) on charges of skipping away from bad debts; and by Fabatus (also in Rome) regarding subversion of Herod's guard (*War*

It is impossible to give a coherent account of Syllaeus's end. What we can say is that Nabatean issues loomed large in Rome's view at this moment, in part because of threats from Armenia and Parthia in 6 BCE (Cassius Dio 55.10). Strabo, a contemporary who knew of Syllaeus's career—and perhaps in Rome at the time—says laconically,

But the man who was responsible for this failure [of Aelius Gallus], I mean Syllaeus, paid the penalty at Rome, since, although he proclaimed friendship, he was convicted, in addition to his rascality in this matter, of other offenses too, and was beheaded.

(Strabo, *Geog.* 16.782)

Although Josephus knows and uses Strabo, he does not refer to Syllaeus's end, nor does he refer to treasonable conduct in the Arabian expedition. It is difficult to account for Syllaeus's three years on the loose in Nabatea while Aretas IV was in power; his execution was probably in Rome in 6/5 BCE.

Meanwhile, Herod banished Pheroras and his wife to Perea, though inexplicably he did not reduce his brother's authority there. When Herod believed he was dying, Pheroras refused to return to see him, even though Herod visited and cared for him when Pheroras himself lay dying a short while later. Herod's visit gave rise to a report that Herod had poisoned Pheroras. He brought Pheroras's body back to Jerusalem in state, declared national mourning, and gave him an impressive funeral (*War* 1.578–81; *Ant.* 17.58–60). Shortly after the funeral rites, two of Pheroras's freedmen claimed his wife poisoned him using a poison masquerading as a Nabatean aphrodisiac that came from Syllaeus or Syllaeus's widow. This charge implies that another of Syllaeus's offenses may have been procuring poison with which to assassinate Pheroras (*War* 1.583; *Ant.* 17.63). Herod resorted to torture again, which resulted in more accusations against Doris, Antipater, and the recently deceased Pheroras (*War* 1.582–90; *Ant.* 17.61–7). Not insignificantly, Salome's long-standing opposition to Doris bore fruit, as Herod divorced Doris a second time (ca. 7 BCE) and stripped her of his gifts (*War* 1.590; *Ant.* 17.68).

Another plot soon emerged implicating Pheroras's wife and Antipater in a poison attempt on Herod while Antipater was in Rome, safely removed from suspicion. She confessed, threw herself from the palace

roof in an unsuccessful suicide attempt (*War* 1.592–4; *Ant.* 17.69–71), and then accused Mariamme II. Herod divorced Mariamme, relieved her father Simon of his high-priestly duties, and struck her son Herod from his will (*War* 1.595–600; *Ant.* 17.72–8). Another accusation against Antipater claimed he had sent Doris a vial of poison to be used on his father. Still another scheme, aiming to undercut Archelaus and Philip (then being educated in Rome), included forged letters suggesting they constantly complained of their father (*War* 1.601–3; *Ant.* 17.79–81), so Herod brought them back to Jerusalem.

Although the stew had been bubbling in Jerusalem for seven months, Antipater had, almost miraculously, not had a whiff of trouble in Rome. Josephus attributes this variously to hatred of Antipater (no one from Jerusalem told him), to the “spirits of his murdered brothers” sealing everyone’s lips (*War* 1.606; *Ant.* 17.82), to Herod’s care in guarding the roads, and to fear for personal safety (*Ant.* 17.82). None of the explanations is persuasive, but perhaps Antipater really did not appreciate his danger, because he wrote Herod he was returning. Herod replied with news of the death of Pheroras and in a second friendly letter he told him not to delay, promising vaguely to drop his complaints against Doris (*War* 1.608–9; *Ant.* 17.83–5). Antipater was now on guard, worried about the implications of Herod’s divorcing his mother for the second time. Some friends argued against his returning to Judea; others thought his presence and his personality would dissipate all suspicion. He sailed in late summer 5 BCE (*War* 1.609–12; *Ant.* 17.86–7).

On landing he realized he was in deep trouble. Everyone avoided him or abused him (*Ant.* 17.88; *War* 1.614). He could not escape, yet he still did not know the pending charges, so he put on a brave front, hoping to brazen his way through (*War* 1.615–16). Antipater was experienced, ruthless, and a survivor, who had rehabilitated his mother, eliminated his rivals, and established working relations with other family members. He was Herod’s heir, he shared Herod’s royal power, and he had become a friend of Augustus’s. How could vague suspicions promoted while he was absent in Rome threaten his position?

Anticipating Antipater’s arrival, Herod had asked Publius Quinctilius Varus, the new governor of Syria (6–4 BCE; previously proconsul of Africa, 7–6 BCE), to visit Jerusalem and advise him in the matter of his son. Varus knew Herod’s son from his year as consul (with Tiberius) in 13 BCE, when Marcus Agrippa had introduced Antipater into Roman society. Augustus dispatched Varus to the east because of his experience and perhaps because he thought Herod was becoming senile (Bowersock 1965, 22).²

As Antipater entered his father's presence, his friends were stopped at the palace gates; he got a cold reception and was told to prepare for his defense the next day on charges of attempted patricide. He learned the whole story only when he met his mother and his wife (*War* 1.617–19; *Ant.* 17.89–92). Herod convened a council, which relatives and friends, including his friends, were allowed to attend. Varus presided, with Herod as chief prosecutor and Nicolas as assistant, leading some of the evidence. Antipater responded effectively (*War* 1.620–35; *Ant.* 17.93–105), so at this stage there was some sympathy for him. Reports of Herod's reactions vary; either he was furious, "knowing that the evidence [of Antipater] was true" (*War* 1.636) or he was "shaken in his purpose, although unwilling to let this be seen" (*Ant.* 17.106).

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In round two Nicolas led with a stinging indictment, reported in detail in *Antiquities*, followed by Antipater's ineffective defense calling on God as his witness. At the close, Varus interviewed Herod privately, sent a report to Augustus, and then left for Antioch (*War* 1.637–40; see *Ant.* 17.106–32).

A few details of the charges are important for an evaluation. (1) The prosecution opened with an intercepted letter from Doris to Antipater urging him not to return because the game was up; no refutation of this damaging evidence is reported. (2) The letter also argued that Antipater should be utterly ruthless, for he already shared Herod's power and authority. (3) The prosecution's main point was that Antipater had engineered the executions of Alexander and Aristobulus and had fomented family dissension. (4) The prosecution also contended that Antipater had involved Pheroras in the plot against Herod, turning Pheroras into a potential fratricide. Josephus mentions neither finding of guilt nor sentence; Antipater was imprisoned, waiting for Augustus's advice following the report to him (by Varus in *War*, by Herod in *Antiquities*; supplemented by an oral report). No news was released to the population at large (*Ant.* 17.133).

What of Antipater's guilt? Certainly he was guilty of sowing dissension and of scheming to establish his own precedence, but those are not capital crimes. He may also have been guilty of scheming against Herod, for (1) he was ambitious, forceful, and anxious to have sole rule; (2) he had positioned himself both in Rome and in Judea to take over smoothly after Herod's death; (3) the circumstantial details, to which he had only the most general defense, sound plausible; (4) family tensions worsened when he was rehabilitated in 14 BCE. Some factors appear to

exonerate him, particularly Augustus's (implied) support and Herod's growing paranoia. Antipater, however, demonstrated little "filial piety": he was thoroughly roguish, embittered by nearly three decades of exile and by Herod's obvious preference for Mariamme's children. Yet Antipater was able, decisive, and energetic—but also cunning and malicious. In some respects, Antipater's story is like Tiberius's story in Rome.

The Acme affair, one aspect of (3) above, requires extra comment, since this is the least plausibly fabricated of the various charges. Acme was a Jewish slave to Augustus's wife Livia in Rome; apparently she forged letters—carried to Jerusalem in a slave's tunic—prompted by Salome's wish to marry Syllaeus. The Byzantine details matter little, but for the fact that this forged letter caused Herod to wonder if the letters implicating Alexander and Aristobulus were also forgeries (*War* 1.644). This in turn might suggest that Alexander and Aristobulus were innocent. In this matter, as in everything else, we are entirely at Josephus's mercy in the way he presents the information. His view is that the other two were not guilty and that Antipater was.

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Herod restrained his instinct to execute Antipater immediately; he renewed his charges that Antipater had plotted against him and abused Augustus's kindnesses. When Antipater remained silent, Herod thought to send him to Augustus (*War* 1.641–4; *Ant.* 17.134–43), but fearing Antipater's charm and extensive contacts in Rome, Herod changed his mind, held him in detention, and sent envoys to Rome with the evidence and a report (*War* 1.644–5; *Ant.* 17.144–5). In early winter (5/4 BCE) Herod fell seriously ill. He made a new will that passed over Archelaus and Philip in favor of Antipas, making generous provisions for Augustus and Livia and Salome ([Chapter 12](#)). His illness worsened and his behavior became erratic. The end of the story—Antipater's execution, the eagle incident, Herod's final illness, death, burial, and the dithering in Rome among the beneficiaries—is covered in [Chapter 1](#).

Conclusion

None of the story is pretty, but it is highly dramatic; it brings to a conclusion the remarkable story of one of history's most tragically flawed geniuses. From relatively obscure though wealthy origins, by good luck, good management, innate ability, and sheer drive, Herod brought himself to the fullest access to power that he could possibly

have achieved in a world dominated by the princeps in Rome. Herod became if not a member of the imperial family, an intimate of members of that family, as well as a colleague of the elites of the surrounding Mediterranean world. At the start an outsider to Judean society, he became a quintessential insider.

Herod left Judea with monumental remains that, 2,000 years on, are still visited, studied, talked about, and reported in the popular press. All visitors to the modern state of Israel stumble over his legacy, his walls, his grand conceptions, and his efforts to turn Judea and nearby areas in modern Jordan and Syria into a local powerhouse.

The epitaph of a later stunningly successful architect, Christopher Wren, is almost appropriate for Gaius Julius Herodes:

*NON SIBI SED BONO PUBLICO
LECTOR, SI MONUMENTUM REQUIRIS,
CIRCUMSPICE*

Not for himself but for the public good;

Reader, if you seek a monument,

look around you

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Evidence of his grandeur and generosity are still all around; and much more evident during his lifetime. Unlike Wren, not everything he did was for the public good. But much of what he did was for the people, for Judea's role in Mediterranean politics, for Judaism's ongoing stature and wellbeing in the Roman Empire. No subordinate king in the Roman world has as thoroughly shaped his own world as Herod, no part of the Mediterranean world was as prominent as Judea, and no local religion of the era was as widely dispersed and as influential as Judaism, though much of that prominence was due to Jews who had left Judea for Diaspora locations. Further, no family left such a mark on the events of the next few generations as Herod's family, and no small region saw such a totally unexpected history-changing event as that unlikely offshoot of the period, Christianity.

Notes

- 2.21; *Ant.* 17.225) and one the chief financial person (*War* 2.14, 16, 24; *Ant.* 17.219, 221, 228), or if they are the same person, Nicolas's brother.
- 2 Varus was still in Syria when Herod died; the troubles following his death are known as "Varus's War" in the Talmud (he committed suicide after sustaining one of Rome's worst-ever defeats in the Teutoberg Forest in 9 ce; Cassius Dio 56.18–24).

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Part II

Herod in context

7 Late Hellenism in the Levant

Syria

Syria, says Strabo,

is bounded on the north by Cilicia and Mount Amanus, ... on the east by the Euphrates; and on the south by Arabia Felix and Egypt; and on the west by the Egyptian and Syrian Seas as far as Issus.

(*Geog.* 16.2.1)

He refers in passing to “the bridge at Commagene,” implying its importance in the politics and power of the region, and goes on to list Syria’s regions: Commagene, Seleucis, Phoenicia, and Judea, though he notes that others divide Syria into three regions: Syria, Coele-Syria, and Phoenicia, with four other tribes intermixed with them—Judeans, Idumeans, Gazans, and Azotians (16.2.2). How an author divided Syria depended on when he wrote; the inclusion of Judea as a separate region was natural at the time of Herod or just after, when Strabo wrote. The inclusion of Idumeans (and surprisingly Azotians) in the lists of “others,” but the exclusion of, for example, Itureans and Samaritans is noteworthy. Strabo’s divisions are sensible and natural; Millar (1993, 225–386) uses a similar scheme in his study, though his divisions are predicated on later geographic designations: “Tetrapolis and northern Syria,” “Phoenician coast and its hinterland,” “Eastern Syria Phoenice,” “From Judaea to Syria Palaestina” (see [Map 2.1](#); Blumell et al. 2014, 11–62).

Syria’s land-forms meant that in antiquity, as today, the region often functioned as a single geopolitical unit—not that it was always under one ruler any more than it is today, but that the geography of the region contributed to an intricate set of relationships where changes in one area prompted changes in other regions. While there was some reason for the whole of Syria to be under one kingdom’s control, it was not always so.

There is a natural minor division on an east–west line roughly between Tyre and Mount Hermon, corresponding with ancient Judea or modern Israel to the south; there is also a natural division along the north–south line where full desert begins to the east.

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Major geographical barriers run north–south, the dominant one being the Rift Valley that cuts in a straight line from Commagene (southern Turkey, the Taurus mountains) through Syria, Palestine, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Red Sea and thence turns inland, eventually to southern Africa. In places the Rift Valley acts as a border, as when it drops to 1300 feet below sea level at the Dead Sea; in other places it is the center of lush valleys, as with the Beka‘a and the Orontes. In what is today Lebanon, two mountain ranges frame the Rift Valley; in Samaritis and Judea the mountains are more gradual but the drop into the Rift Valley is steeper. The farther north, the more rainfall there is, and the farther that rainfall penetrates inland; the farther south and east, the drier the climate.

The land-forms allow relatively straightforward north–south travel; routes can be found around natural barriers to permit reasonably good transportation. The easiest routes in antiquity were along the seacoast and east of the Rift Valley behind the Anti-Lebanon mountains, but there were also routes using the Orontes, Beka‘a, and Jordan Valleys, all manageable in antiquity as they are now. Three transverse features, however, distort north–south communications: the Mount Carmel range juts into the sea between Dor and Ptolemais and divides the southern coastal plain from Lower Galilee; the hills of Upper Galilee interrupt links between Lower Galilee and the Phoenician coast; and ranges of hills both south and north of Antioch block the most direct route between Syria and Asia Minor. Travel, whether military or commercial or cultural, moves in and out from the seacoast according to the local conditions (Smith 1902).

Syria was large and varied but integrated. It was a unit, whether for geographic, political, and intellectual reasons (to Strabo among others), or for conquest and defense. Nevertheless, within Syria there were autonomous or semi-autonomous states whose borders were fluid in the first century BCE and first century CE. The difficulty in defining the changing fortunes of Iturea, for example, was true of other states. This fluidity influenced Herod’s story; his borders expanded as opportunities arose or contracted as politics required. A tendency to empire ran through the whole period. The Seleucids tried to retain control of a vast

empire centered on Syria, not always successfully; their rivals, the Ptolemies, wanted to extend their control through the whole of Syria, but obtained only about half, up to the natural line through Mount Hermon.

Rome came to see Syria as an extension of their march from west to east, which culminated in Pompey's decisive intervention ([Chapter 3](#)). At the same time, Parthia, to the east, viewed Syria as a logical next step in their drive westward, offering a vital opening to the Mediterranean that Parthia's originally landlocked position south of the Caspian Sea denied them. Parthia first expanded south to the Persian Gulf, but by the beginning of our period had moved westward to the upper Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

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Figure 7.1 Looking northwest from Batanea, Mount Hermon is the highest peak in the region, marking—in modern terms—the intersection of Lebanon, Syria, and the Golan (Gaulanitis). The long ridge is the Anti-Lebanon mountain range, beyond which is the area most commonly known in antiquity as Coele-Syria.

The waning of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties and the rise of two new rivals, Rome and Parthia, made mid-first-century BCE Syria particularly volatile. In the clash of the titans there was no predicting

whether Parthia in the east or Rome in the west would win out. Nor was it obvious how other less powerful states should respond. Should they throw their lot in with Rome? With Parthia? Create coalitions against both? Carve out a small territory and hope for the best? Maintain tenuous neutrality? Each of these approaches was tried (Sullivan 1990, 17–24).

During Syria's long and distinguished history, future cultures were shaped; among its glories had been advances in agriculture, writing, mathematics, metalworking, trade, and urbanization. It was a vigorous center of civilization, predating the glories of Greece or Rome or Parthia. In the early imperial years Syria was again a center of civilization, though it was a mixture of Greek, Roman, and indigenous cultures. Some of the great cities of the region flowered in the struggle for empire that ensued in the three centuries following Alexander the Great: Antioch (Antakya), Laodicea (Latakya), Berytus (Beirut), Tyre (Sur), Heliopolis (Baalbek), Damascus (Dimashq), Apamea (Qalaat al-Madiq), Aleppo (Halab), Palmyra (Tadmor), and Bostra (Busra).

Dependent kingdoms

The richest and most important of the smaller states in the north was Commagene, which controlled the crossings of the Euphrates River at Zeugma (Belkis) and Samosata (Samsat). Commagene comprised a fertile series of valleys with access to large iron deposits; it was at a crucial corner where Hellenistic, Semitic, and Iranian lands met (Sullivan 1990, 59; Millar 1993, 452–62). Josephus states: “Of all the monarchs owning allegiance to Rome the King of Commagene enjoyed the highest prosperity” (*War* 5.461). But its advantages of position and prosperity opened it to serious challenges that it did not manage to escape, for its river crossings were crucial in the coming conflict between Rome and Parthia. Again Josephus puts it neatly: “Samosata . . . would afford the Parthians . . . a most easy passage and an assured reception” (*War* 7.224).



Figure 7.2 From the city of Bostra (Busra), looking northeast across Auranitis, the Jebel Druze/Jebel Arab/Jebel Hawran rises in the distance, with Trachonitis to the photograph's left. In the foreground is the stage building of the second-century theater, the period when Bostra reached its peak. The region around Bostra was one of the granaries of the Roman Empire.

Parthia and Commagene were combatants as early as the 90s BCE, a struggle impossible for Commagene to win; it became a “reluctant subkingdom, one of the many that warranted assumption by Tigranes of the title King of Kings” (Sullivan 1990, 193). It is uncertain when Rome and Commagene first came into contact, but Rome knew its interests in the east would be considerably strengthened if it controlled Commagene. Skillfully, Antiochus I of Commagene (ruled 70–38 BCE) allied himself to Rome, calling himself *philorōmaios* during the period when Pompey was active in the east, setting the model for his successors to follow (Sullivan 1990, 194; Schwentzel 2010).

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Antiochus's greatest monument was the tumulus and *hierothersaion* at Nemrud Dag, on the summit of a 7000-foot (2134-m) mountain in the Ankar range, overlooking the Euphrates River, with rock-cut terraces on the north, east, and southwest sides of the tumulus. The eastern courtyard has an impressive ensemble of sculptural and architectural

monuments: a pyramidal altar, colossal seated Hellenistic statues (25 to 30 feet high), and bas-reliefs on standing stones. The reliefs provide a genealogy, the colossal statues a syncretistic pantheon: Apollo-Mithra-Helios-Hermes; Tyche; Zeus-Ahuramazda; Antiochus; Herakles-Artagnes-Ares; with lion and eagle statues flanking both ends. The west terrace had a similar row (Akurgal 1985, 346–52; Brijder 2014).

The epithet *philhellēnos* adopted by Antiochus's son, Mithradates II, complemented his father's *philorōmaios*, recognizing the Hellenistic grandeur of his father's monuments at Nemrud Dagħ. He built another memorial to his mother, his dead sister, and his niece, with an inscription to another sister who became Queen of Parthia (Sullivan 1990, 197). These cultural and political connections tell the tale of Commagene, which managed well to carve out a quasi-independent existence until Rome took it over in 17 CE; it was annexed as a Roman province in 72 CE.

Farther south, the city of Emesa (Homs) was the center of another Syrian territory that remained quasi-independent until about the same period (Millar 1993, 84; Ball 1990, 33–6). The city was set beside the Orontes River, at the point where a route between the Mediterranean coastline and the interior crossed the river after a relatively narrow pass (a pass guarded in the Crusader period by the Krak des Chevaliers). The kingdom was an Arab state, “founded not so much on agriculture as on the pastoral life the Arabs preferred” (Sullivan 1990, 62; Millar 1993, 300–9), mediating between coastal settlements and the *skēnitai* (“tent-dwellers,” later “Saracens”) of the desert. The Romans neither occupied Emesa nor raised taxes there (Millar 1993, 34), because Emesa came early and enthusiastically to Rome's side; in 51 BCE Cicero referred to Iamblichus I of Emesa as “well-intentioned and a friend to our republic” (Cicero, *Letters to Friends* 15.1; quoted in Sullivan 1990, 200). Its kings, hoping to take advantage of Syria's disintegration, were active in the downfall of the Seleucids, though when Parthia invaded in the 40s BCE Emesa faced serious problems because of its longstanding alliance with Rome. Emesa was, however, untypical. As an Arab territory in an agriculturally desirable region, it seems not to have developed to its full potential as a settled population. Fewer significant remains comparable to those in other areas attest to its Hellenistic-Roman culture.

East of Emesa, Palmyra (Tadmor) occupied an oasis on a major east-west caravan route. Palmyra originated in the Stone Age; most of its archaeological treasures, however, stem from the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Richardson 2002, [chapter 2](#)). Inclusion in Rome's sphere is attested epigraphically from the early years of the first century CE (Stoneman 1994; Millar 1993, 34–5, noting a boundary marker from

11–17 CE). Inscriptions excavated under the Temple of Bel attest a cult site in 44 BCE, but likely predating that. Some of the nearby tower tombs from the same period used polygonal sandstone blocks, unlike the later ashlar masonry (Michalowski 1968, 6).

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Palmyra's arid steppe is watered by infrequent springs and winter rains that pass from the Mediterranean through Emesa. Wadis hold the winter rain, permitting cultivation of cotton and grains. A spring that runs from Jebel Muntar forms the oasis that made Palmyra such an important desert post. The claim that Solomon "strengthened Tadmor in the desert" (2 Chron. 8:4) probably confuses this with the parallel references to Tamar in the Judean wilderness (1 Kings 9:17–18), though for such a confusion to arise, Tadmor/Palmyra must have had a long history as a defensible, rich, and independent city on a major trade route.

Palmyra was active on the Seleucid side in the battle of Raphia (217 BCE), according to a hint by Polybius. Appian (*Civil Wars* 5.9) says Mark Antony plundered Palmyra after entertaining Cleopatra at Tarsus in 41 BCE and he comments, "being surrounded on their borders by the Romans and the Parthians, they were dealing skillfully with both. Indeed, they were merchants who transported from the Persian Empire Indian and Arabian products to be sold in the Roman Empire" (Bounni & Al-As'ad 1988, 13). Pliny the Elder stresses Palmyra's nobility, richness of soil, and isolation, and he suggests that it acted as a middleman between "the two great Empires," Rome and Parthia (Pliny, *NH* 5.88). An inscription of 34/33 BCE from Dura Europus on the Euphrates refers to two Palmyrenes dedicating a Temple of Bel and Yarhibol outside the city (Millar 1993, 298). In short, Palmyra was a quasi-autonomous first-century BCE kingdom, with a strong Hellenistic—and later equally strong Roman—influence.

Palmyra was extensively developed in the first century CE and onward (Richardson 2002, 26–36). For example, the Temples of Bel and of Nabu date from the first and the third quarters of the first century CE respectively; as a result, they do not reflect the city a century earlier, before a Hippodamian plan was imposed on the city. Still, some of its art and sculpture—static, objective, frontal—predates the first century CE and is a vivid witness to a merging of Greco-Roman and oriental traditions of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia, reflecting cultural vitality and independence during the city's late Hellenistic and early Roman phase.

Seleucid control of Syria was severely eroded during the late second and early first centuries CE. Armenia intruded into Seleucid areas east of the Euphrates and small kingdoms—for example, Judea under Alexander Janneus—picked away at Syria’s soft spots. During the intra-family struggles of the period, Damascus was capital of a small kingdom (Bowersock 1998, 25–30), first under Antiochus Cyzicenus (ca. 111–95 BCE) and later under Antiochus XII (d. 84 BCE), though there may have been short periods of Armenian or Nabatean rule. When Itureans pressed from the west and south, Damascus asked Nabatea for help; like camels in the tent, Nabatea ended up controlling Damascus under Aretas III. The city was a political football until Pompey seized it as a crucial center of Syria (*War* 1.127; *Ant.* 14.29). The Seleucid Empire came to an end when Rome grasped its opportunity in 65/64 BCE and moved into this agriculturally rich, cultured, and strategic area. After Antony gave Damascus and other valuable territories to Cleopatra, Octavian regained them for Rome.

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Damascus, which owed its location to the Barada, a torrential mountain river flowing down the east flank of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains, was a crucial link in Syria (Burns 2005). Though cut off from the Mediterranean by two mountain ranges and the Beka’a Valley, Damascus was at the juncture of old transportation routes that ran north, south, southeast (along the Wadi Sirhan), and northeast (Millar 1993, 36–7, 310–19). A road joining Damascus to Berytus on the Mediterranean paralleled the Barada past Abila and Chalcis, into the Beka’a Valley, and thence over the Lebanon range to the sea. Brigands troubled some roads out of Damascus ([Chapters 2 and 3](#)), inadvertently providing an opportunity for Herod to show his mettle.

Reputed to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world, there is little evidence from the first century BCE to permit evaluation of Damascus’s culture in that period. Strabo gives little help, except to claim that it was “a noteworthy city, . . . I might almost say even the most famous of the cities in that part of the world in the time of the Persian empire” (*Geog.* 16.2.20). The enormous Temple of Jupiter (first century CE), approaching the size of Herod’s *temenos* in Jerusalem, implies that in this period, and perhaps earlier, the city adopted a Hippodamian plan. Incorporated into the plan was a theater built by Herod, attested by a curved street that interrupts the plan; there was also a major Seleucid palace and a large enclosed *agora*. In the same period (late first century BCE) a temple to Roma and Augustus may have been located in Damascus, but that is uncertain.

Nicolas of Damascus indirectly hints at the character of the city when describing his father, Antipater, as a skilled orator who filled all the offices of the city and represented it before other cities (*FGrH* 90 F 131, 132; cited in Millar 1993, 314). Nicolas was a historian of considerable talent, while his brother was a financial expert. Herod imported Nicolas and his brother to advise him after Cleopatra had hired Nicolas to tutor her children. These small insights suggest that Damascus was a typical Greek *polis* with the customary institutions of such a city, affording sophisticated educational opportunities for talented youths, providing training that allowed them to move in the highest circles of the Roman east.

Part of what made Damascus unusual was its large Jewish population (*War* 2.561; *Acts* 9:2 mentions multiple synagogues; Noy & Bloedhorn 2004, 65–8), as might be expected in a major commercial and communications center close to Israel. The Jewish community may have been active, though little can be said about relevant aspects of Damascus's religious life until the mid-first century CE (the Damascus document of the Dead Sea Scrolls indirectly may attest to the presence of Jews in Damascus, but probably has nothing to do with Damascus itself). Damascus was a thriving center of Hellenistic culture on the edge of Herod's kingdom, with Jewish evidence like many other Syrian cities (Noy & Bloedhorn 2004).

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These late Hellenistic kingdoms—some dependencies of Rome—were intermarried in multiple complex ways. A web of royal linkages provided the region's stability, for they depended upon each other as self-supporting related dynasties (Sullivan 1990, *passim*). While the families were autonomous and their interests differed, and while there was rivalry and mistrust, each shared a link with Rome, reinforced by ties of marriage and by a kinship system flowing from these links, all major factors in the dynastic politics of the Near East from the first century BCE to the second century CE.

Herod, a key player, occupied a critical piece of the region's geography, holding the only land route between Syria and Egypt, on the border between the Arabian plateau and the settled littoral. He had familial ties with two neighboring Arab groups, Idumeans and Nabateans, and eventually he developed marital ties with other kingdoms. Not surprisingly, he figured prominently in the politics of the Levant in the late first century BCE.

As noted in Part I, his was not the only smaller kingdom to have complex relations with Syria. For example, Nabatea rubbed against Syria on Syria's southern border around the Jebel Arab. For some uncertain period Nabatea was in control of territories often thought of as Syrian: Canatha (Qanawat), Salkhad, Bostra (Busra), and smaller villages around the Jebel Arab, in the Hauran, or Auranitis (Peters 1977). Since the main center of Syria was Antioch and the more arable region around the Orontes and the Litani Rivers, conflict with Nabatea was infrequent. Still, there was rivalry for dominance in that part of Syria, and it is testimony to Rome's view of Herod's reliability that he and his descendants had the upper hand in that region.

The Decapolis

A loose association of mainly Hellenistic cities known as the Decapolis (*dekapoleis*, "ten cities") occupied an uneasy buffer zone between Syria, Iturea, Nabatea, and Judea (Kasher 1990; Kasher, Rappaport, & Fuks 1990; Spijkerman 1978; Browning 1982; Schürer 1973–87, 2.1–97, 130–60; Bietenhard 1970). Whether they formed a true league is disputed (Parker 1975, 437–41); of two important inscriptions (*IGL* 2631 = *IGR* 1057; *IGR* 1.824), the earlier favors not so much a league as administrative association (Isaac 1981, 67; per contra, Millar 1993, 92, 423–4).

Only rarely were there ten cities; the number fluctuated as cities matured and as political winds blew in different directions. Pliny lists ten (*NH* 5.74): Damascus, Philadelphia, Raphana, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippos, Dium, Pella, Gelasa (= Gerasa), and Canatha, but he says others provide different lists. Ptolemy adds Abila, Lysanias (cf. Luke 3:1), and Capitolias, but he omits Raphana (*Geography* 5.14.18). Josephus rarely mentions the Decapolis as such (*Life* 342, 410; *War* 3.446), but he mentions specifically Hippos, Gadara, and Scythopolis in *Life* 349; and in *War* 3.46 he refers to Pella, Philadelphia, and Gerasa as boundaries for Perea. Stephen of Byzantium later lists fourteen, some, such as Bostra, coming to prominence only later.

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Herod controlled two of them for a period, but the association constituted a challenge to Judea, not so much in military terms as in cultural and religious matters (see [Map 4.1](#)). All but one were east of the Rift Valley; several had advantageous sites in desirable areas that ensured a strong economy and a high standard of living. Gerasa (Jerash),

Abila (Tell Abil and Tell umm el-Ammad), and Canatha (Qanawat) controlled good agricultural areas. Others such as Hippos (Susita), Amathus (Hamata), and Philadelphia (Amman) were easily fortified and defended strongholds (Aviam & Richardson 2001, 180–1). Gadara (Umm Qeis) was an important center of learning and philosophy southeast of the Sea of Galilee. As the home of Philodemus, Meleager the poet, Menippus the Cynic, and Theodorus (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.29), it had an influential Cynic school with links to larger cities in the Roman world. None of the Decapolis cities had access to the coast and maritime trade.

Scythopolis (Bet Shean), the one city west of the Jordan and closest to the sea, was at the intersection of a north–south road along the Jordan River and a route from Ptolemais on the Mediterranean through the Jezreel Valley and the Plain of Esdraelon. Once across the Jordan it was easy to connect with Pella, Gadara, Hippos, and the areas beyond each of these cities (see [Figure 7.3](#)). The Bet Shean excavations reveal Scythopolis’s significance (Tsafrir & Foerster 1994; Mazar 2006), while excavations at Fahil show Pella was less important than previously thought (Smith & Day 1989).



Figure 7.3 The Sea of Galilee (Lake Gennesaret), filled mainly by runoff from Mount Hermon, is about 210 m (700 feet) below sea level and about 21 by 13 kilometers (13 miles north to south and 8 across). Hippos, one of the cities of the Decapolis, was in the center of the photo (which looks northeast), on top of

Most Decapolis cities were re-founded following the conquest of Alexander the Great. Pella, for example, was named for Alexander's birthplace in Macedonia and settled by retired veterans; Dium was named after Dium in Macedonia; Scythopolis was named for Alexander's Scythian troop who settled the city. Development occurred mainly in the Ptolemaic and Seleucid periods and largely within those spheres of influence, so it is not surprising that the Herodian period experienced hostility between Jews and Decapolis cities as Judea fought for its political and religious autonomy ([Chapter 2](#)).

Herod's relations with the Decapolis were affected by relationships during both the Hasmonean period and early in the Roman period. Under the expansionist policies of John Hyrcanus, Aristobulus I, and Alexander Janneus, many Decapolis cities were captured, though they were not faced with the same choice as Idumeans and Itureans—live as Jews or get out. Still, some left, few were converted to Judaism, and most resented their treatment more strongly than was true of Idumeans or Itureans. Decapolis citizens were rooted culturally in Macedonia or Greece or Asia Minor, with no ethnic or religious affinities with Judea or the Levant. When seven cities fell under the sway of the Hasmoneans, they felt bitterly the loss of their independence.

After Pompey ended the infighting between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, following Queen Alexandra's death, he restored the independence of the Hellenistic cities. In 63 BCE he imposed a peace settlement upon Judea, the most important aspects of which reduced Judea's territory and placed free cities under the Syrian governor's authority. The cities regained autonomy over coinage and probably over financial, judicial, cultural, and religious matters. Coins of some cities continued to bear Pompeian-era dates, reckoned from 63 BCE, until the third century CE.

Excavations demonstrate that the Decapolis cities flourished, with theaters (Gadara and Gerasa each had two), hippodromes (Gerasa, Gadara, Bostra), amphitheaters (Scythopolis), baths and nymphaea, substantial public buildings, and civic spaces. There were architecturally innovative projects, such as the Oval Piazza at Gerasa. Hellenistic cults were the norm; the awe-inspiring remains of Gerasa's Temple of Artemis (second century CE) testifies to the city's religious vitality; the earlier and more dynamic Temple of Zeus (first century BCE) was an imaginative

place of Decapolis piety (Richardson 2002, [chapter 4](#)). Though some of these buildings postdate Herod, the liveliness of these centers of Hellenistic culture is not in doubt.

Scythopolis (Bet Shean), almost totally surrounded by Jewish settlements, was the most important Decapolis city; all, however, improved the prospects of the region through roads, aqueducts, small harbors (at Hippos and Gadara, on the Sea of Galilee), and infrastructure projects. Damascus was a special case, not part of the Decapolis in the Herodian period, and with a sizeable Jewish population, whereas most Decapolis cities had relatively small Jewish communities. Contemporary evidence is thin, though a later synagogue has been excavated at Gerasa, where a sixth-century Byzantine church was built on an earlier third- or fourth-century synagogue; at Scythopolis there is both a later Byzantine synagogue and a later Samaritan synagogue (Ben David 2011). In the early stages of the Great Revolt several Decapolis cities suffered from the revolutionaries, but Josephus notes that the Jewish community in Scythopolis opposed the Revolt (*War* 2.466–76).

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Augustus gave Herod Hippos and Gadara in 30 BCE because of Herod's friendship and support. Josephus does not say why only these two and not others; part of the reason may have been that these cities bordered the Sea of Galilee on the east and southeast, impinging upon the integrity of Herod's territory, and interrupted transportation around the lake. But Scythopolis and Pella, too, affected circulation within Herod's kingdom, forming a barrier to north–south traffic along the Jordan, and both would have been ripe plums to hand over to Herod. He did not get them.

At the time of Herod's troubles with Zenodorus ([Chapter 5](#)), Gadara's petitions to Marcus Agrippa against Herod (22/21 BCE) and to Augustus (20 BCE) were unsuccessful. When Herod died in 4 BCE some unnamed cities petitioned Augustus to have their freedom restored; Hippos, Gadara, and Gaza were successful and were put under the governor of Syria (*War* 2.97; *Ant.* 17.320; Stern 1974, 248–60). The repeated attempts to be freed from Judean control reflect deep unhappiness with Herod in Hippos and Gadara. Both cities were vigorously attacked in 66 CE and destroyed by the revolutionaries (*War* 2.459); Josephus says Justus of Tiberias set fire to both (*Life* 42), so it is no surprise that both retaliated against the Jews when the tide turned (*War* 2.478). A curious incident in which Vespasian gave Agrippa II a motley crowd of prisoners

—including many from Trachonitis, Gaulanitis, Hippos, and Gadara—to do with as he wished may have been counter retaliation. The confrontations show how deeply Hippos and Gadara wanted political freedom from Judea's aggression.

With the one exception of an inscription from Si'a—linked to Canatha by a sacred way—literary and archaeological sources are silent on the question of gifts by Herod to Decapolis cities ([Chapter 10](#)). Herod built in Damascus, to be sure, but it was not a part of the Decapolis in his day. Some of these cities, part of his kingdom for a quarter-century, might have expected benefits from Herod's largess. Evidence of links with Judea could have been to the advantage of both, since Herod needed healthy relations to satisfy Augustus and the cities could benefit from Herod's closeness to imperial power. Evidence of benefactions is lacking.

The coastal cities

The Hellenized coastal cities had different origins from the Decapolis cities but, like some of those cities, many free coastal cities had been taken over by the Hasmoneans. Gaza, Raphia, Rhinocorura, Azotus (Ashdod), Anthedon (later Agrippias; now Khirbet Teda), Joppa (Yafo), Jamnia (later Yavneh), Straton's Tower (later Caesarea Maritima), Apollonia (Arsuf), and inland Marisa (Maresha), Adora, and Samaria (later Sebaste) were at one time or another under Judean control, won by force of arms or negotiation (Eshel/Richardson forthcoming). Pompey freed all of them; after his settlement of 63 BCE Syria's governor loosely ruled them. Gabinius rebuilt a number of them a few years later, including Gaza, Azotus, and Anthedon, intending no doubt to restore their fortunes and bolster their position. Joppa's loss was an acute blow to Judea's economy since it was her main outlet to the sea and to international trade beyond. Its importance was reflected in Alexander Janneus's coins that bore an anchor on the obverse, the anchor alluding to Judea's maritime cities (Meshorer 1967, 56–9). Though Joppa was reacquired by Judea in 44 BCE under the auspices of Julius Caesar (Schürer 1973–87, 1.273–5), one of his numerous favorable actions toward Jews to reinforce Judea's economy, Antony gave it to Cleopatra (36/35 BCE) along with Jericho, other coastal cities, and Iturea (see [Chapters 3](#) and [4](#)). Augustus returned Joppa to Herod in 30 BCE, together with Gaza, Anthedon, Jamnia, and Straton's Tower (and also Gadara, Hippos, and Samaria). Herod did not, however, get Ashkelon or Dor or Ptolemais (Acco).

Placing these territories under Herod posed peculiar problems. The origins of some cities lay in Philistia, their more recent roots were Ptolemaic. Some had substantial Jewish communities, probably larger than in corresponding Decapolis cities as a result both of natural emigration and Hasmonean settlement. Their locations on the main route between Egypt and Syria meant the coastal cities were in touch with the cultural and intellectual currents of the day, sooner and more intensely than inland cities. Synagogues of various later periods have been found at Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Jaffa, and Caesarea Maritima.

The Decapolis and coastal cities alike were restive under Herod's rule. They shared one essential feature: all had known, and some still enjoyed, autonomy. Despite varying backgrounds and differing histories, they also shared a renewal of freedom under Pompey's settlement. Returning to Judean rule was hardly welcomed by the majority of the population. During most of the first and second centuries CE, however, the Decapolis and the coastal cities (especially Gaza, Ascalon, and Dor) were independent. Farther north on the coastline, a string of Greek cities—Ptolemais (Acco), Tyre (Sour), Sidon (Saïda), Tripolis (Tripoli), Balanea (Baniyas), and Laodicea (Latakya)—perpetuated a similar cultural inheritance over a Phoenician background. Berytus was the only imperial and Latin foundation (Millar 1993, 264–95).

The coastal cities had a stronger, more self-confident form of Hellenism than could be found in the major cities of Judea. It is true that Greek ideas and institutions, not to mention Greek language and literature, had long influenced the Jewish heartland; evidence of this is clear and long acknowledged (Tcherikover 1959; Hengel 1974). Judea sometimes attempted to reverse the drift toward Greek ways of thinking and acting and feeling; several forms of sectarian Judaism reflected this struggle ([Chapter 12](#)), and the Great Revolt's violence directed at the Decapolis and coastal cities attempted to reverse the tide (*War* 2.459). But as the Hasmonean family showed, Hellenism was almost impossible to resist.

The evidence of benefactions to coastal cities is stronger, but mixed. Herod transformed one city, Straton's Tower, into a remarkable showcase. Caesarea Maritima, as it was renamed, was a splendid blending of Roman technology, Hellenistic spirit, and a Judean need for

a “world-class” port (Holum et al. 1988; Richardson 2002, [chapter 5](#)). He re-founded Anthedon and renamed it Agrippias in honor of his good friend Marcus Agrippa. Other coastal cities within his territory got little benefit from Herod’s largess, yet cities slightly beyond his borders, such as Ptolemais, Tyre, and Sidon, may have benefitted substantially. The case of Ascalon is debated: Larry E. Stager challenges the traditional view that an excavated building in Ascalon was Herod’s gift, attributing it instead to the Severan period (Stager 1991). Josephus’s comments in *War* 1.422 (baths, fountains, colonnades), *War* 2.98 (a palace), and *Ant.* 17.321 (royal palace) hint at extensive benefactions but they do not put matters beyond question.

No explanation of this varied evidence is completely convincing. Perhaps Decapolis cities such as Hippos and Gadara were reluctant to accept substantial gifts from a Jewish king because of continued antagonism toward Judea, after Hasmonean mistreatment of these cities. It is possible, alternatively, that Herod resented Pompey’s removal of these flourishing cities from Judea. Or, again, Herod may not have been as much of a Hellenizer as he is painted. Some cities that did attract his attention had substantial Jewish numbers (for example, Damascus, Ascalon, Caesarea Maritima, and Sebaste), which may have been a factor, while in the cities that were ignored in the competition for benefactions there were few Jews, and few incentives to throw them favors. If, as we suggest for the Diaspora, one of Herod’s goals was to improve Jews’ relations with their fellow citizens through benefactions ([Chapters 6 and 10](#)), the absence of benefactions where Jewish numbers were small is not surprising.



Figure 7.4 Hellenistic Tel Dor had natural harbors—a rarity in the Levant—to its north and south, with dry-docks for servicing ships, a Hippodamian plan, and an impressive defensive wall. Herod's construction of Caesarea Maritima impacted Dor's prospects negatively.

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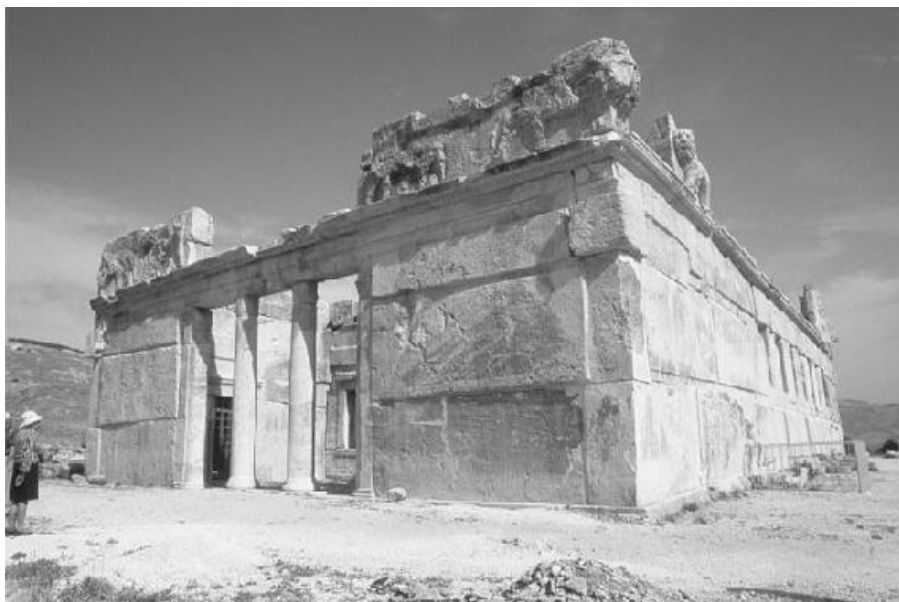


Figure 7.5 Araq al-Emir (earlier Tyros) is situated in a fertile valley with a number of springs 17 kilometers west of Philadelphia (Amman). The Tobiad family—a wealthy Hellenized Jewish family whose name is inscribed nearby—built a two-story structure on an island surrounded by a reflecting pool. Its lower course of masonry uses massive stones about 8 feet high, while lions and tigers decorate both top and bottom courses.

Conclusion

The foregoing brief survey clarifies two points. On the one hand, Judea was almost entirely surrounded by centers of Hellenistic civilization, and it had increasingly Hellenized cities within its own borders. On the other hand, Herod—and Judea—managed this situation relatively calmly, though with some important occasions of hostility; more importantly, its ever-widening borders encouraged Judea to assume an increasingly significant role in the region. It is true that, from the other side, the extent to which this situation was viewed as threatening depended on the degree to which one was Hellenized and the degree to which one appreciated how Herod and his courtiers were moving along the road to accommodation with the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. The result was that the specter of Hellenism was a religious flashpoint within some circles during Herod's reign, a situation that contributed to the emergence of religious groups opposed to the Hellenizing trend ([Chapter 12](#)).

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8 The kingdom

The Senate awarded Herod four pieces of territory on elevating him to kingship in 40 BCE: Judea, Galilee, Perea, and Idumea. The latter is not in all sources, but Appian (*Civil Wars* 5.75) mentions Idumea and Samaria and Strabo (*Geog.* 16.2.46) refers to parts of Judea being “clipped off.” Augustus later added Samaritis, Hulitis, Gaulanitis, Batanea, Auranitis, and Trachonitis, some reallocated from Iturea, some from Nabatea, and some from Syria (see [Chapters 2](#) and [7](#); [Map 4.1](#)). In its final form the kingdom’s extent was roughly comparable to the kingdom of David and Solomon a millennium earlier; after being subdivided on Herod’s death it was reunited for three years under his grandson, Marcus Julius Agrippa I. Most of the sub-regions had substantial numbers of Jews, a majority in the cases of Judea, Galilee, and Perea; if one does not quibble about questions of conversion, this also may have been true of Idumea. But in some areas, such as Auranitis and Trachonitis, a substantial majority of inhabitants would not have been Jewish, either ethnically or religiously.

Galilee

Geographical Galilee has reasonably clear boundaries. Its southern border is the Carmel range and it continues along the north face of Mount Gilboa, a northwest to southeast line from modern Haifa to the Jordan River; south of this line is Samaritis. Galilee’s northern boundary runs roughly from the “Ladder of Tyre” (the mountainous drop into the Mediterranean north of Acco) eastward to Lake Huleh; north of this line was independent Tyre. On the east, Galilee is constrained by the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee/Lake Gennesaret. Its western boundary, even after the conquests of Aristobulus I and Alexander Janneus, was independent Ptolemais (Acco), which included a narrow strip of land blocking access to the Mediterranean.

Galilean subdivisions include the Megiddo Plain, the Bet Netofa

Valley, and the Jezreel Valley—Galilee’s most fertile parts—separated from each other by a series of hills (rising to about 600 meters) dominated by Mount Tabor. These areas, together with hills south of the Beth Kerem Valley, comprise Lower Galilee. To the north, more rugged hills (rising to about 1200 meters) constitute Upper Galilee, with few major valleys (Aviam/Richardson 2001, 177–80). Since physical features of both Upper and Lower Galilee mostly run east to west, there were impediments to north–south traffic; the best roads crossed diagonally to the northeast (Bilde 1994, 247–62). Josephus catches the situation well:

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Galilee, with its two divisions known as Upper and Lower Galilee, is enveloped by Phoenicia and Syria. Its western frontiers are the outlying territories of Ptolemais and Carmel, a mountain once belonging to Galilee, and now to Tyre. ... On the south the country is bounded by Samaria and the territory of Scythopolis up to the waters of Jordan; on the east by the territory of Hippos, Gadara, and Gaulanitis ...; on the north Tyre and its dependent district mark its limits. ... With this limited area, and although surrounded by such powerful foreign nations, the two Galilees have always resisted hostile invasion. ... [T]he land is everywhere so rich in soil and pasturage and produces such a variety of trees, that even the most indolent are tempted by these facilities to devote themselves to agriculture. In fact, every inch of the soil has been cultivated by the inhabitants; there is not a parcel of waste land.

(War 3.35–42)

He exaggerates its arable richness. Particularly important in his description, however, is the notion that Galilee was surrounded by “foreign nations”: Tyre (Sour), Ptolemais (Acco), Samaria-Sebaste, Scythopolis (Bet Shean), Gadara (Umm Qeis), Hippos (Susita), and Gaulanitis, to which could be added Panias (Banyas) to the north and Philoteria (Beth Yerah) to the east (Aviam/Richardson 2001, 183–4, 193). Though this situation changed, there were always cities (*poleis*) surrounding Galilee whose origins lay in Hellenistic civilization, going back to the conquests of Alexander the Great (Chapter 7), each of which had its own territorial integrity and contiguous rural area. In a few cases (Hippos, Gadara, Scythopolis) city areas abutted each other. The majority of the conflicts between such cities and Galilee arose from inevitable tensions between peoples with dramatically different traditions.

Galilee’s rainfall derives from the Mediterranean’s prevailing westerlies that bring moisture-laden clouds. The more gradual rise in land in Lower Galilee, as compared with Upper Galilee, means that rain-clouds penetrate farther inland and distribute rain more evenly, so rain averages about 600 mm; in Upper Galilee rainfall averages about 800

mm per year (Gal 1993). The rainfall combined with good soil in the valleys ensures healthy crops, especially olives (the most important area in Palestine for olives), grapes, and grains (Aviam 1993).

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Figure 8.1 Excavations at Qana (New Testament Cana) have disclosed evidence of a growing small town with an industrial area, a first-century synagogue, various housing types, and a later veneration cave to help pilgrims recall Jesus's turning water into wine. Across the Beth Netofah Valley, a rich Galilean agricultural zone, lay Sepphoris, Galilee's capital, located on the low hill with buildings clustered on the middle left.

Main roads in antiquity followed natural features. The Via Maris used the coastline, despite its difficulties where the road worked its way over the Ladder of Tyre; the section from Ptolemais (Acco) to Antioch (Antakya) was the earliest datable road (56 CE) in the region. A branch passed through Arbela and around the north end of the Sea of Galilee; another branch linked Tiberias to Panias by a route east of the Jordan River. A road linked Sepphoris with Legio (Lajun/Megiddo Prison) and Sebaste-Samaria farther south. An east-west road joined Ptolemais and Tiberias; another connected Panias and Tyre. While the explicit evidence for paved Roman roads is no earlier than the first century CE (Aviam 1993, 455), unimproved roads preceded these routes, to judge from

literary evidence of travelers or armies or trade. There were other local tracks or dirt roads, the most important being the natural east–west route along the Beth Kerem fault line (from Ptolemais to Chorazin through modern Karmiel), for which there is no evidence of a paved road in antiquity.

In the Hellenistic period Upper Galilee was a hinterland to Ptolemais and Tyre, a region of small villages (ninety-three Hellenistic-period sites have been identified in Upper Galilee), with relatively few larger centers. When Judaism flourished in Galilee in the Hasmonean period following the victories of Judah Aristobulus I and Alexander Janneus, some sites were abandoned but most became Jewish towns and villages (138 Roman-period sites have been identified in a survey of Upper Galilee; Aviam 1993, 453–4).

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Figure 8.2 Yodfat (Josephus’s Jotapata) was a small first-century BCE/ first-century CE town a few kilometers from Cana, which Rome’s legions successfully besieged in 67 CE, though it took forty-seven days. The Jewish general, Josephus, surrendered here to the future emperor, Vespasian, beginning a patronage relationship that allowed Josephus the conditions to take up his major writing projects.

Galilee’s main city during the early Jewish phase was Sepphoris

(Zippori), located on a small hill south of the Bet Netofa Valley, about halfway between the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee (Weiss 1993; Nagy et al. 1996; Netzer & Weiss 1994). Gabinius had made it the capital of Galilee (ca. 57 BCE), though few remains of that period have been found. After Herod took it, it functioned as his “northern command post for the rest of his reign” (Meyers & Meyers 1997), and under Herod Antipas it was one of the two capitals of Galilee. Antipas’s other capital was Tiberias, founded in honor of the Emperor Tiberius ([Chapter 13](#)). Less important towns were Yodefat (Jotapata), Beersheba in Galilee, Meroth, and Qana (Cana). Yodefat was a small walled town, founded in the late Hellenistic period, with extensive areas of early Roman housing occupying a walled area, and fragmentary evidence of a public building. Some walls predated the revolt of 66 CE, while others were constructed during the conflict. Qana was similar though unwalled, with evidence of a first-century CE synagogue (Richardson 2004, chapters 3–5). Jewish settlements were distinct from non-Jewish areas at a later period, and perhaps also earlier; for example, the sanctuary of Apollo at Kedesh, together with two temples across the border in modern Lebanon—all originating in the Hellenistic period—marked the northern edge of Jewish settlement (Aviam & Richardson 2001, 179–80).

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Galilee was a complex area prior to Herod’s reign, parts heavily Jewish as a result of Hasmonean policies, parts with mixed populations, and around its edges late Hellenistic cities and religious sanctuaries (especially in the west and north). A peasant population on small farmsteads worked the land: some owned the land outright, some rented it as tenant farmers, some worked as day laborers. There is little evidence for villas of wealthy landowners such as are found in other regions of the Empire (Fiensy 1991, 55–60); the evidence is “incomplete,” even slight, and mostly from the Herodian period or later. Fiensy’s descriptions of royal estates (1991, 24–55) list none in either Upper or Lower Galilee. Only one house at each of Jotapata (Yodefat) and Qana (Cana), where attention was paid to housing, fits the description of “wealthy” (Fiensy & Hawkins 2013; Richardson 2004, 64–6, 75–81; see [Figures 8.1; 8.2](#)).

Judea

Judea was a small area, from just north of Jerusalem to Beersheba and

from the western edge of the Judean plateau to the Dead Sea, an area of about 80 km (50 miles) by 32 km (20 miles), the southern portion of which was Idumea. Judea was bordered on the west by the Shephelah, a rough limestone landscape of foothills, covered with woods and thickets, which was largely infertile—a kind of no-man’s land, except for occasional towns such as Marisa. Farther north was the Sharon, an uninhabited area of marshes and forests. Along the coastline, at an earlier time, was Philistia, but in the late Hellenistic period the coast was occupied by independent cities.

There is a distinct “rain line” north–south through Jerusalem, caused by the steep rise between the Shephelah and the hill country of Judea, which forces moisture-bearing clouds up, cooling them and precipitating their moisture, so little rain falls farther east. Thus the eastern strip of Judea along the Rift Valley is a steep and rugged wilderness, almost uninhabitable, which drops nearly 4000 feet (about 1250 meters) to the Dead Sea. In the Judean hills rainfall is adequate, and the arable soil, mostly in the valleys and lower hillsides, can sustain olives, grapes, and, in small areas, grain. Judea’s core area is a plateau of high hills, up to 3400 feet or 1100 meters (Ofer 1993, 3.815–16).

A north–south road meandered from Samaria-Sebaste to Beersheba, passing through Jerusalem and Hebron. Another road connected Jerusalem and Jericho, parallel to the Wadi Qelt, making the 1200-meter drop in only 22 or 23 kilometers (about 13 miles). Roads linked Jerusalem to the northwest with Joppa-Jaffa (Yafo), and to the southwest with Marisa (Beth Guvrin; Eleutheropolis), beyond which lay Ascalon and Gaza, and then Egypt (see [Figure 8.7](#)).

Jerusalem, the cult center of Judaism, was the key to Judea. It attracted increasingly heavy pilgrim traffic as the *pax Romana* brought easier travel, more disposable income, and fewer border problems ([Chapter 10](#)), resulting in a demand for good roads, lodging, food, water, and sacrificial animals. Jerusalem was the royal capital, military center and chief arsenal, as well as the economic center for taxation, trade, and international links. As the ceremonial center, visitors outside the boundaries of Judaism, including important political visitors, came to see the sights. Archaeological excavations have provided evidence of the wealthy and elite, attracted by the advantages of nearness to the religious and political administration, and to economic and international influence (Levine 2002; Mare 1987; Wilkinson, 1978; Jeremias 1969).

Jerusalem was continuously inhabited from the Chalcolithic period (and first noted historically in the Egyptian Execration Texts in the twentieth–nineteenth c. BCE); it was a significant stronghold, regularly destroyed, rebuilt, and strengthened. Centered on the eastern hill (the ancient City of David and Mount Moriah), it was naturally defensible. By the Hasmonean period it had expanded to the adjacent western hill (today's Mount Zion). Deep valleys on the east, west, and south (the Kidron and Hinnom Valleys) provided natural protection, though it was open to attack from the northwest. The city was overlooked by Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives from the east, and by higher sloping ground on the north and west. The Gihon spring provided a secure water supply that had been developed so that it was within the walls for use in emergencies.

Returning exiles from Babylonia (ca. 538 and 521 BCE) resettled Jerusalem, rebuilt the ruined walls, and restored the sanctuary, though in meaner form than the original. Two centuries later it was still small and poverty-stricken. Its physical condition improved after Alexander's conquest of Judea in 332 BCE, followed by a period of stability under the Ptolemies. Following Seleucid victory at the battle of Panias (200 BCE), Antiochus IV Epiphanes targeted Jerusalem for transformation into a Greek *polis* ([Chapter 2](#)). When the Hasmonean revolt against the Seleucids succeeded, Jerusalem expanded, especially under John Hyrcanus I and Alexander Jannaeus, with new residential areas, a new royal palace, improved and expanded walls, and extension of the temple areas. Dynastic disputes among the later Hasmoneans and Rome's interventions under Pompey (63 BCE) and Gabinius (55 BCE) slowed Jerusalem's growth, with Roman damage to the city's fortifications being repaired by Antipater, Herod's father (48/47 BCE).

Jerusalem was not the only heavily fortified place in Judea. The Hasmoneans built several wilderness fortresses overlooking the Rift Valley: Masada to the south (though there is no archaeological evidence of Hasmonean structures; Netzer 1993b, 3.973–85); Hyrcania near the Wadi Kidron (Patrich 1993, 2:639–41); Docus and Threx overlooking Jericho (Netzer 1993a, 1.315–17); and Macherus on the eastern side of the Dead Sea (Vörös 2013). These formed a system anchored in the north by Alexandreion (Tsafrir & Magen 1993, 4.1318–20) to defend Judea and Samaria from Nabatea and the Decapolis cities. Whether there were other Maccabean “fortlets” along the southern border is less certain (Kasher and others say there were Herodian fortifications; Shatzman 1991, 55, thinks “the evidence is remarkably scanty or negative”).



Figure 8.3 Solomon's Pools, with three large reservoirs, was one of the main water supplies for Jerusalem, more than 20 km to the north, carried there by complex aqueducts; the ordinary kind

of aqueduct, shown here, was carved into bedrock following the natural contours and plastered.

“The Judean hills . . . were the least densely populated component of the country’s Central Mountain Massif . . . [and] population fluctuations were quite extreme” (Ofar 1993, 3.815, 816). During the Persian period the numbers declined seriously in the southern sector, especially in and around Hebron and farther south, though population density was maintained from Beth Zur to Jerusalem. In the Hellenistic period, settlement intensified, with an increase from seventy to ninety-one settlements, according to the survey (from 111 acres to 150 acres in total), though the density was never high, despite its proximity to Jerusalem, since the land could not sustain a large population; settlements—major towns were Hebron, Ziph, and Adoraim—and semi-nomadic uses were linked symbiotically. In his description, Josephus exaggerates, as he did in describing Galilee:

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[Samaritis and Judea] consist of hills and plains, yield a light and fertile soil for agriculture, are well wooded, and abound in fruits, both wild and cultivated; both owe their productiveness to the entire absence of dry deserts and to a rainfall for the most part abundant. All the running water has a singularly sweet taste; and owing to the abundance of excellent grass the cattle yield more milk than in other districts. But the surest test of the two countries is that both have a dense population.

(*War* 3.49–55)



Figure 8.4 The earliest of Herod's three temples dedicated to Roma and Augustus and one of the earliest in the Empire, Sebaste's *sebasteion* was begun shortly after the Senate named Octavian "Augustus." Herod chose a site in the old city of Samaria because of its mixed ethnic make-up; only foundations and steps leading up to the temple survive. Samaritis's better agricultural prospects show in its rolling hills.

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Josephus lists the toparchies: "Gophna . . . , Acrabeta, Thamna, Lydda, Emmaus, Pella, Idumaea, Engadi, Herodion, and Jericho. To these must be added Jamnia and Joppa . . . and . . . Gamala, Gaulanitis, Batanea and Trachonitis." Of these, only Emmaus, Idumea, Engaddi, Herodion, and Jericho are in Judea. Josephus does not claim as extensive an agricultural enterprise for Judea as he did for Galilee. There were various kinds of cultivation, but much of the activity was herding sheep and goats. The Judean hills had plots of intensely cultivated land and some—but not many—large farms; and there were manufacturing activities, such as Jerusalem stoneware, Jericho date wines and perfumes, and Dead Sea bitumen.

This heartland of Judaism, centered on Jerusalem, was more thoroughly Jewish than other regions. While it may have included some Idumeans not fully acclimatized to Judaism in southern areas, some Romans in western parts, and Samaritans in the north of Judea, to a first

approximation Judea was Jewish territory governed by the laws and customs of Judaism.

Samaritis

Between Galilee and Judea lay Samaritis. The Mount Carmel–Mount Gilboa line marked its northern border, the Jordan River its eastern border, an indefinite line a few miles north of Jerusalem its southern border, and the drop between the hill country and the Sharon its western border. When Josephus lumps together Judea and Samaritis (see the excerpt above), he is not altogether fair to Samaritis, for it was more fertile than Judea.

It comprised three sub-regions: northern, southern, and western Samaritis (Zertal et al. 1993, 4.1311–18; Dar 1992, 5.926–31). Northern Samaritis, focused on Mount Shechem and Mount Ebal (940 m), had wide cultivable valleys, frequent water sources, and good soil. The number of towns prior to the Byzantine period peaked in the Persian period, perhaps explicable on the basis that “some of the Babylonian returnees settled in Samaria (and not only in Judah) in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE” (Zertal et al. 1993, 4.1312). The survey found 247 Persian-period sites, 140 Hellenistic sites, and 146 early Roman sites; the number climbed to 358 in the Byzantine period. The decline in the Hellenistic period has been attributed to Samaritan opposition to Alexander the Great. In the early Roman period there was a small increase, especially in the northwestern sub-region. Southern Samaritis was harsher; in contrast to northern Samaritis, the number and size of the sites declined to ninety in the Persian period, with renewed prosperity in the Hellenistic period (by the Roman period there were 215 sites). Western Samaritis, characterized by clusters of small settlements and by groups of farmhouses, was more densely populated than the other regions.

By the early Roman period some settlements had grown to small or medium-sized towns. Umm Rihan, a town of 9–10 acres, is a good example. It included 100 well-built courtyard houses, a well-organized network of streets, a water supply, defensive structures, public areas (including a bath, shops, mausolea, a public building, and oil presses), and mostly Persian and Hellenistic structures (Zertal et al. 1993, 4.1314–15). Field towers, common in western Samaritis, began to be built in the Hellenistic period and may have been characteristically Hasmonean. In the late Hellenistic and Roman periods (and into the Byzantine period) the clusters of farmhouses began to be replaced by larger estates (Fiensy 1991, 31–43, with maps 2, 3, and plan 1).

Samaritis permitted extensive agricultural development, especially in the western areas where rainfall was good (550 to 700 mm per year); rainfall declined substantially in eastern Samaritis (200–400 mm per year). Crops included grapes, olives, fruits, grain and vegetables, and of course sheep. Some hills were terraced in antiquity to inhibit erosion and improve productivity.

A north–south road ran through the hills from Samaria and Shechem to Jerusalem in the south and to Ginae (Jenin) and the Jezreel Valley in the north; another main road ran southwest from Shechem to Joppa (Yafo), and another northwest to Straton’s Tower (Caesarea Maritima), extending in the opposite direction to the Jordan Valley, past Alexandreion. There was also a southeast–northwest route along the Wadi Far’ah past Mount Ebal and on to Ginae. At this intersection a route cut through the Carmel range along the Dothan Valley, connecting the Jezreel Valley with the Coastal Plain.

There was no evidence of destruction of Persian-period settlements to explain fewer Hellenistic sites. The Hasmoneans encouraged increased cultivation as they attempted to “Judaize” Samaritis. Since it is not possible to differentiate Jewish from Samaritan sites (even tombs cannot be categorized with certainty), changes in the religious and ethnic make-up of the various towns and villages cannot be analyzed (Zertal et al. 1993, 4.1317–18).

The largest settlements were Samaria and Shechem-Neapolis (Nablus), both under the shadows of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. The latter was the main center of Samaritan religion; a fortified city on Mount Gerizim covered about 75 acres (Tsafrir & Magen 1993, 2.484–92). Other settlements were at Narbata-Arruboth (Khirbet al-Hammam), Umm Rihan, Qasr el-Lejah, Qasr el-Haramiyye, Khirbet el-Buraq, and Qarawat Bani Hassan; only Narbata has been identified. The Hasmonean fortress at Alexandreion (Sartaba), dominating the Jordan Valley and controlling roads, played an important role in the history of the Hasmoneans and Herod.

A large percentage of the population was Samaritan by religion. Strabo claims that the populations of Judea, Galilee, Jericho, Philadelphia, and Samaria-Sebaste were all “mixed stocks of peoples of Aegyptian and Arabian and Phoenician tribes” (*Geog.* 16.2.34). He may be wrong about specific mixtures, but his late first-century BCE view that these populations were mixed is important, although exactly what that mixture was and how it may have altered over time is unclear. More

detailed excavation results are needed, with sufficient data to differentiate Samaritans and Jews. Samaritan synagogues in a number of locations in the ancient world demonstrate that Samaritan religion maintained distinctives—despite their similarities—from Judaism, which was widely dispersed and vigorous (Pummer 2016, 170–94; Pummer 1997). The scholarly world has not seized on the question of Samaritan synagogues in the same way it has been attentive to Jewish synagogues, but the accumulating evidence, both archaeological and literary, is providing information about Samaritan synagogues in various periods and at such diverse Diaspora locations as Delos, Tarsus, Thessalonica, Syracuse, and Rome, and in the holy land at Sha'alvim, Tel Qasile, Scythopolis (Beth Shean), Ramat Aviv, and, of course, in various locations in the homeland of Samaritis (Pummer 2016, 91–111).

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Gaulanitis, Batanea, Auranitis, and Trachonitis

East of Galilee was Gaulanitis, part of which was Iturean ([Chapter 2](#)). Ancient Gaulanitis corresponds roughly to the modern Golan, east of the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee and north to the slopes of Mount Hermon, bounded on the south and east by the Yarmuk River and its tributaries. Most of Gaulanitis is a basalt plateau covered by arable soil, punctuated by volcanic cones. Rainfall varies from 350 mm to 1200 mm per year in the south—the most fertile portion, known for its oil, wine, and grain (Ma'oz, Goren-Inbar, & Epstein 1993, 2.525–46; Smith 1902, 540–7, 611–38; Schürer 1973–87, 2.10–15). Schürer emphasizes its judaization, pointing to the Mishnah's legislation for these areas in the second century CE, as well as their Jewish organization (Schürer 1973–87, 2:184–98).



Figure 8.5 Gaulanitis, from north of the Sea of Galilee, rises up from the Jordan River, which cuts across the photograph flowing from north to south (left to right) on its way eventually to the Dead Sea. Beyond Gaulanitis was Batanea and Auranitis, good agricultural areas, with rough Trachonitis north of Auranitis.

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The road system in Gaulanitis connected with roads already described. A north–south road ran from Panias down the east bank of the Jordan, past Lake Huleh, along the east side of the Sea of Galilee and then around the lake, or up to Gadara, or down the valley; an east–west road went through Bethsaida and Chorazin; another east–west road ran from Panias to Tyre in one direction and northeast to Damascus in the other, or southeast to Auranitis, where milestones—mostly second century CE—have been found that generally followed earlier road systems (Ma`oz et al. 1993, 2.537). Links around the lake and up to Panias and Damascus formed a major transportation route in antiquity. Farther east, the King’s Highway ran north from Philadelphia and Gerasa to Damascus. A third more informal route ran southeasterly along the Wadi Sirhan into the Arabian Plateau.



Figure 8.6 A few miles east of Gaza, Idumea today is a relatively fertile area because of an aqueduct carrying water from the north to the south. In antiquity Idumea was a boundary area between the Judean hills to the north and the Negev desert to the south, much less arable than today. This was the geographic region that Herod's father's family called home.

The area was sparsely inhabited in the Persian and early Hellenistic periods, but beginning with the Seleucid victory at Panias growth was substantial (from seventy-eight sites in the second century BCE—thirty-three of them Iturean—to 108 in the first century CE). After the Syrian victory, Damascus developed as a political and religious center. With Hasmonean expansion, the increased population in the Golan improved its economic base and provided a defensive buffer for Judea; despite these important factors, Gaulanitis was still a frontier, with a frontier's advantages and disadvantages.

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Major settlements were few: Bethsaida-Julias on the northeast corner of the lake (Arav 2004; Savage 2011), Gamla a few miles farther east on an easily defensible spur in a deep valley, Panias (Banias) at the head waters of the Jordan on the lower slopes of Mount Hermon (Wilson 2004), Seleucia (Qusbiyye), and Hippos/Susita (Segal & Eisenberg 2007), the latter a Seleucid fortress but by the first century BCE part of

the Decapolis. Farther east in Batanea were Naveh and Dium, the latter also a Decapolis city.

Iturean culture influenced Gaulanitis from the second century BCE; for some of the time it controlled Trachonitis, Mount Hermon, the northern Golan, and the Beka'a Valley in Lebanon ([Chapter 2](#)). When the region came under Herod's direct control the number of Iturean settlements increased; in all, 143 early Roman sites have been identified. Typically these were small unwallled clusters of farmsteads, suggesting that despite Itureans' generally bad press, many were sedentary agriculturalists (Ma'oz et al. 1993, 2.535–6; Urman 1995 373–617). Sixty-seven sites have been identified, all at elevations of 700 m or more, of which thirty-three were Hellenistic and thirty-eight early Roman (see Ma'oz's descriptions). Judaism in the Golan Heights (see Urman 1995, 373–617) is best represented by the early Roman site of Gamla, destroyed after a Roman siege in 67 CE, during which it had been partially walled. Gamla provides excellent pre-70 CE evidence of a Jewish town with a coherent street system, terraced houses, a water system, a synagogue, *miquaoth*, and oil presses.

Batanea was east of Gaulanitis on an elevated plateau; its ancient name, the Bashan, meant “smooth or stoneless plain; fertile, fruitful” (Slayton 1992, 1.623–4). Its broad, flat plains were suitable for cattle, timber, and agriculture, while its wheat made it an important granary of the Empire. Such factors rendered it suitable for large estates and for settling military veterans: in the first century BCE Herod settled Babylonian veterans in Batanea (Isaac 1990, 329–31), and in the second century CE Judah ha-Nasi had a large estate in Batanea.

Southeast of Batanea was Auranitis (the Hauran, Jebel Druze/Jebel Arab), a massive volcanic eruption that rises from the surrounding plateau to a height of 1800 m. Rainfall of 500–750 mm per year and fertile volcanic soil ensures that the regions around Canatha (Qanawat), Dionysias (Suweida), Bostra (Busra), and Salecah (Salkhad) were arable, though their fields were filled with small stones and boulders (see [Figures 7.1; 7.2; 8.5](#)).

North of Batanea and Auranitis lay Trachonitis (al-Leja; *trachōn* = “rough, rocky”), another volcanic area filled with innumerable small volcanic cones. It was not well suited to settlement, though in places erosion washed topsoil into small valleys and depressions. Herod settled Idumean veterans in Trachonitis, an unattractive reward for their service. Much later, the Emperor Philip the Arab (r. 244–9 CE) came from Trachonitis, whose major city he named Philippopolis (Shahbah) in his own honor.

Strabo refers to “the Trachones” as “hilly and fruitful” (*Geog.* 16.2.16), perhaps meaning the areas around the Jebel Druze; he then describes the Beka’a Valley as home of the Itureans (“robbers,” in 16.2.18), before turning back to Damascus, and the “two Trachones, as they are called. And then, toward the parts inhabited promiscuously by Arabians and Ituraeans, are mountains hard to pass, in which there are deep-mouthed caves” (16.2.20). This description applies mainly to Trachonitis. Josephus gives the region only brief attention, referring to it as having a “mixed population of Jews and Syrians” (*War* 3.57).

From a Judean viewpoint one might think of these four regions as a unit; they were not, however, except politically in some periods. On the one hand, Gaulanitis and Batanea were good agricultural areas, arable, suitable for raising cattle, with natural resources such as timber. They had been part of Biblical Israel acquired by conquest during David’s kingdom, then lost, then regained. On the other hand, Auranitis and Trachonitis were less productive and less desirable, though helpful as defensive buffers. When incorporated into the kingdom, Judea gained some economically beneficial farmland, improved borders, and, most importantly, control of transportation routes, all good reasons for Herod’s military settlements. Routes through this area passed between the Jebel Arab and Mount Hermon, linking central Syria with areas along the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, Yemen (Saba/Sheba), and Babylon.



Figure 8.7 The Judean hill country is an area of rolling hills with a decent amount of rainfall able to sustain some types of agriculture, such as grapes and olives. The hills are gentle, while the valleys tend to be more arable because soil erosion collects there in greater depth.

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Perea

Stretching along the Jordan River, south of Gaulanitis and Batanea (that is, south of the Yarmuk River), was Perea (*peraios*, “on the other side”). Like Galilee, Perea was surrounded by Hellenistic cities: Scythopolis (Beth Shean), Pella (Fahil), Gadara (Umm Qeis), Gerasa (Jerash), Philadelphia (Amman), and Heshbon/Esbus (Tell Hesbān). Two of these cities, Pella and Gadara, formed Perea’s northern boundary; because they abutted each other, they blocked easy communication with other parts of the kingdom. Josephus describes Perea as follows:

Peraea, though far more extensive [than Galilee], is for the most part desert and rugged and too wild to bring tender fruits to maturity. However, there, too, there are tracts of finer soil which are productive of every species of crop; and the plains are covered with a variety of trees, olive, vine, and palm being those principally cultivated. The country is watered by torrents which never dry up. ... The northern frontier is Pella, ... the western frontier is the Jordan; on the south it is bounded by the land of Moab, on the east by Arabia, Heshbonitis, Philadelphia and Gerasa.

(*War* 3.44–7)

Roads extending into Perea completed several of the routes mentioned earlier. The main north–south route on the east side of the Jordan River did not reach the Dead Sea but turned east to climb steeply up to Philadelphia (Amman). A second main north–south route, the King’s Highway, linked the Gulf of Aqaba and Petra to Heshbon, Philadelphia, Gerasa, Adraa/Edrei (Deraa), and Damascus. Jewish pilgrims and traders would have used the valley road for most purposes. East–west roads went up to Gadara from both the Sea of Galilee and Pella, and thence to Capitolias (Beit Ras), Adraa, and Bostra (Busra). Another road joined Scythopolis, Pella, and Gerasa; farther south a road connected Neapolis/Shechem (Nablus) with Philadelphia; still farther south, a road joined Jerusalem with Philadelphia, through Jericho and Betharamphtha/Livias.

What Josephus says of Perea’s “desert and rugged” area is largely true, especially in some of its deep wadis and along the Dead Sea

shoreline, below Macherus. Rainfall in the Jordan Valley is very modest (380 mm in the north to 100 mm near the Dead Sea), but other parts are fairly well watered both by rainfall and natural rivers, especially in the hill country (700 mm in northern Perea to about 300 mm in southern Perea). This moisture supports the agriculture to which Josephus refers. Especially valuable, as Pliny suggests (*NH* 12. 111, 24), was the cultivation of balsam. Insufficient research has been done to give a clear picture of settlement patterns in Perea, though excavations reveal some significant features. South of Pella, at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh, was a large Persian palace with a later Hellenistic fortress. Tell Deir 'Alla, a major site, was abandoned from the Hellenistic period onwards. Tullul edh-Dhabab, occupied in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, had a 5-m-wide casemate wall with 9-m-square towers, terraces, retaining walls, peristyles, Doric colonnades, and evidence of iron smelting; occupation ended in the late first century BCE, possibly due to the earthquake of 31 BCE (Khoury 1980, 40–5, 51–4, 55–7).

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Figure 8.8 Hulitis (or the Huleh swamp) owes its character to a volcanic ledge across the north end of the Sea of Galilee, holding back the Jordan River. Now restored to its earlier swampy condition, it recalls an incident in Herod's career when brigands took refuge here and in a fortress on Keren Naphtali, in the background.

There were three sites in close proximity opposite Jericho, where the road's ascent to Philadelphia began. Betharamphtha (Tell er-Rama), where Herod built a palace, renamed both Livias and Julias (Schürer 1973–87, 2.176–8), Bethnamaris (Tell Nimrin), 5 miles north, mostly a late Roman and Byzantine site with evidence of earlier occupation, and Abila (Khirbet Kefrein), about halfway between. Farther south on the Dead Sea was Callirrhoe (Zara), one of the great hot springs of antiquity, with thirty-eight thermal sources serving structures from the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods. It may have functioned as a royal estate with a spacious villa, surrounded by a number of dwellings separated by gardens (Khouri 1980, 75, 86–8; Eshel/Richardson forthcoming). A little off the beaten track, this area was a Perea equivalent to Jericho with its royal palaces, palms and estates. With a small harbor at Callirrhoe, Macherus was the most important Hasmonean structure east of the Jordan, defending the southern end of Perea as well as Judea across the Dead Sea. Macherus, with Masada and Hyrcania, created a strong bulwark against Nabatea. In the hill country of Perea, Gedora (es-Salt; Schürer 1973–87, 2.134, n.250), Amathus (Tell 'Ammata), and Ragaba (Rajib) were the most significant settlements (*War* 1.86, 89, 170; *Ant.* 13.356, 374, 14.91; *Ant.* 13.398).

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In Israelite times this was Gilead, a Jewish area, though by the late Hellenistic period the area had a mixed population of Jews, Greeks, Nabateans, other Arabs, and descendants of Ammonites (see [Map 4.1](#)). It was famous in the ancient world for its “balm,” resin from a type of balsam, perhaps from the Ajlun area (Jones 1992, 1.573–4).

The most remarkable structure in the area is Araq al-Amir (Netzer 2000, 340–53; see [Figure 7.5](#)) in the Wadi es-Sir (west of Amman), a Tobiad palace with pool, adjacent structures, and caves, one cave marked by an inscription reading “Tobiah.” The Tobiads were a Jewish family connected with the Oniad high priests, who supported the Ptolemies in Egypt and thus were at odds with Jerusalem authorities in the Second Temple period. This important family appears in the Lachish Ostraca, in the Zenon Papyri, and in Josephus (*Ant.* 11.4). The building, decorated with massive lions, leopards, and eagles, was a late third-century BCE Jewish palatial residence set on an artificial island within a large artificial “reflecting pool.” While it was deeply influenced by Hellenistic canons of taste, it was still an essentially Jewish structure, though clearly a unique example of its type. Some of the Jewish population in Perea may have followed a similar accommodation with Hellenism, though this is uncertain. Perea as a whole was home to many

Jews in the early Roman period; it was a natural part of Herod's original kingdom in 40 BCE, along with Galilee, Judea and Idumea. It was later paired with Galilee as Herod Antipas's tetrarchy.

Conclusion

The areas described above, with some coastal and Decapolis cities, comprised Herod's kingdom at its greatest extent. Though dissimilar, each region had natural advantages and economic benefits and each was part of what was historically identified as Israel a millennium earlier. Might the near coincidence of Herod's kingdom with David's be not so much an accident of unrelated decisions by Augustus as the result of Herod's lobbying for the extension of his borders to embrace these historic areas? We cannot say if this were so, but we can say that the end result was that areas heavily Jewish—or thought to have been—came to fall to Herod, and we can also say that there were few extensions beyond the historic limits. The original gift to Herod of Judea, Idumea, Galilee, and Perea was a foundation for later grants predicated on Herod's continued loyalty to Augustus, his ability to govern Jews effectively, and his demonstrated commitment to Rome's policies.

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Four observations on Augustus's grants of territory to Herod are appropriate. (1) Whether deliberately or accidentally, Augustus created a prosperous self-sustaining territory, well defined geographically, with useful transportation routes and good access to the sea. (2) At the same time he maintained the integrity of the Province of Syria and also of Nabatea—later the Province of Arabia—as self-sustaining areas, both well served by good transportation. (3) He reduced, but did not totally eliminate, the likelihood of political and military conflict among the major players in the Levant. (4) He left open for the future the possibility that Judea and Arabia might become provinces, two decisions that did in fact follow—though at different times and for different reasons—as a way of regularizing their relationships with Rome.

Finally, we should underscore the settlement patterns mentioned in the above brief summaries. There was substantial expansion in numbers and also in size of settlements during the early Roman period, of which the Herodian period is an important subordinate period. It would be irresponsible to claim that Herod was responsible for whatever expansion, whether in numbers of settlements or in their size, took place during the second half of the first century BCE. But at the very least

archaeological evidence shows the period was not—as used to have been commonly said—a period of decline and hardship ([Chapter 10](#)). On the one hand Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and Perea shared in the general prosperity of Augustus’s *pax romana*; on the other hand, as one would expect given Herod’s relationships with Augustus and Marcus Agrippa, Herod’s pattern of widespread and grandiose building projects reflected a pattern found in Rome, though perhaps with the difference that Herod distributed his largess over a considerably wider area ([Chapter 9](#)).

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9 Herod's architecture and archaeological remains

Herod constructed a large number of forts, palaces, temples, infrastructure projects, and entire cities during his reign, whose skill, planning, and bravado continue to impress and awe today. He spared no expense, particularly on his palaces, and their level of sophistication is still evident in their ruin. Hostile environments—on top of mountains, in deserts, or both—were no obstacle to Herod's placement of luxury palaces, which he filled with features that were novel, even in Rome at the center of the empire: heated baths, sunken gardens, expansive and expensive wall paintings, and decorated floors.

One cannot discuss the architecture of Herod without also discussing the prolific work of Ehud Netzer, the doyen of Herodian architecture. Netzer knew the architecture of Herod in a way few can parallel. Yet, for all of Netzer's expertise, many of his findings are postulates, not incontrovertible facts. This is not to say that Netzer did not base his findings on good data, but ultimately all archaeological interpretations of sites are just that: interpretations, open to re-interpretation and new appraisals. We rely heavily on Netzer's work, while also discussing other scholars' hypotheses.

Herod's building projects can be categorized in various ways: for example, Netzer divides Herod's buildings into five use-related categories (Netzer 2008a, 303). Instead, we follow the building program roughly chronologically using three broad groupings: the phase when Herod was establishing his kingdom, the phase when he was creating his legacy, and a third section for projects that fall outside those two broad categories (while the dating of Herod's buildings is speculative, we think a basic chronology can be established). The third group includes Herod's building projects outside his kingdom; though listed by Josephus, little has been done to search for these buildings archaeologically, in part because Herod is so strongly conceived of as "king of the Jews." The

archaeological focus has been squarely on his work within his kingdom, and especially the buildings that fall within the modern state of Israel; little effort has been put into sites in Jordan that may be Herodian, excepting Macherus, or sites in Syria, and investigations get thinner as one gets farther from his homeland (see [Table 9.1](#)).

Table 9.1 Herod’s building projects

(a) *The Early Years*

<i>Project</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>All dates</i> BCF	<i>Comments</i>
Alexandreion (Sartaba)	War 1.133–7, 161–72, 308, 334, 528–9, 551; <i>Ant.</i> 13.417; 14.48–52, 82–94, 394, 419; 15.84, 185; 16.13, 317; Strabo <i>Geog.</i> 16.2.40; <i>m. Rosb</i> <i>Hash.</i> 2.4	39/38	Hasmonean fort (Alexander Janneus and Alexandra Salome) remodeled by Herod and Pheroras
Antonia Fortress, Jerusalem	War 1.401; 5.238–46; 5.238–46; <i>Ant.</i> 15.292; 15.403–9, 424; 18.91–5; 20.30	37–35	On the site of the Baris
Hasmonean Palace rebuilt, Jerusalem	War 2.344; <i>Ant.</i> 20.190	mid-30s	Location not known
Family Tomb, Jerusalem	War 5.108; 5.507	Before 31	Outside Damascus Gate; re-buried after excavation
Cypros/ Kipros (Tell el-'Aqaba)	War 1.407, 417; 2.484; <i>Ant.</i> 16.143; Strabo, <i>Geog.</i> , 16.2.40	30s	Originally Hasmonean fort near Jericho (Taurus? Threx?)
Masada I: part of Western Palace, other residences	War 1.236–8, 264–67, 286–7; 2.408, 433–4, 446–7, 653; 4.339, 516, 555; 7.252–407; <i>Ant.</i> 14. 296, 361–3, 390–1, 490; 15.184; Strabo <i>Geog.</i> 16.2.44; Pliny <i>NH</i> 5.73	mid-30s	For dating of Masada structures, see Netzer in <i>Masada</i>
Macherus (Mukkawer)	War 1.161, 164–77; 2.485–6; 4.555; 7.164– 210; <i>Ant.</i> 13.83, 89–97, 417; 18.111; Strabo <i>Geog.</i> 16.2.40; <i>m. Tamid</i> 3.8; <i>j.</i> <i>Svu'it</i> 9.2.38d	ca. 30?	At border of Perea and Nabatea; rebuilding of Hasmonean fort, built by Alexander Janneus.
Hyrkania (Khirbet Mird)	War 1.161, 167, 364, (664?) 684; <i>Ant.</i> 13.417; 14.89; 15.366; 16.13; 17.187; Strabo <i>Geog.</i> 16.2.40	30s	Hasmonean fort, built by John Hyrkanus, rebuilt by Herod
Jericho I (Tufel Abu el-Alaiq)	War 1.407; Strabo <i>Geog.</i> 16.2.40	35	Re-buried after excavation

Docus/Dok/ Dagon (Jebel Qarantal)	<i>Ant.</i> 13.230–5; <i>War</i> 1.54–6 Strabo <i>Geog.</i> 16.2.40; 1 Macc. 16:11–16	30s	Overlooking Jericho; Hasmonean fort rebuilt by Herod
Hebron, Memorial, patriarchs/ matriarchs	No literary refs to Herod; see 1 Macc. 6.65; <i>Ant.</i> 13.257–8; <i>War</i> 4.530–3	30s	Identified as Herodian by architectural features
Mamre, Memorial, Abraham	<i>War</i> 4.530–3	30s	Identified as Herodian by architectural features
Si'a, Ba'al Shamim	No literary evidence	32/31	Inscription
Rhodes, Apollo	See below, section (d)	Early 30s	Extent of role not known
<i>(b) Post-Actium Building Phase</i>			
Palace, Jerusalem	<i>War</i> 1.402; 5.156–83; 7.178; <i>Ant.</i> 15.292, 318	23	Vaulted substructure
Phasaelis, Mariamme, and Hippicus Towers	<i>War</i> 1.418; 2.46, 439; 5.144, 147, 161–75; 7.1–2; <i>Ant.</i> 16.144; 17.257	mid-30s?	Base of one tower standing
Hippodrome, Jerusalem	<i>War</i> 2.44; <i>Ant.</i> 15.268; 17.255		Beyond RR station?
Theater, Jerusalem	<i>Ant.</i> 15.268, 272, 279		Wadi es-Shamm? Or wooden?
Sebaste Walls	<i>Ant.</i> 13.275; 15.292–3, 296–8, 342; 16.136–41; <i>War</i> 1.64, 403, 415; Strabo <i>Geog.</i> 16.2.34	27–12	Dating of round towers at gate uncertain
Roma & Augustus Stadium	<i>Ant.</i> 15.298	20s	On Sebaste Acropolis
Apsidal Building?		20s	Below city center
Atrium			Identified in excavations
House?			Identified in excavations
Pente Komai (Fondaquma)	<i>Ant.</i> 15.296	27–20	Military settlement
Jericho II palace	Rebuilding of Hasmonean palace	Early 20s	Hasmonean palace destroyed 31
Gabae (Sha'ar ha-'Amaqim?)	<i>Life</i> 115–18; <i>War</i> 2.459; 3.36; <i>Ant.</i> 15.294, 299; Pliny <i>NH</i> 5.19.75	28–24	Military settlement

Table 9.1 (continued)

(c) <i>Creation of a Legacy</i>			
<i>Project</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>All dates</i> BCE	<i>Comments</i>
Masada II Northern and parts of Western palaces, storerooms	See above	ca. 25	Herod's most imaginative project
Herodium (West) (Jebel Fureidis) Upper Palace	<i>War</i> 1.265, 419–21, 673; 3.55; 4.55, 518–19; 7.163; <i>Ant.</i> 14.360; 15.323–5; 16.13; 17.199; Pliny <i>NH</i> 5.70	20s	Site of Herod's mausoleum Upper palace a key project
Lower Palace		20s	Less well studied, but integrated with Upper Palace
Small theater and reception room		Late 20s	Used only briefly
Mausoleum			Still under discussion
"Course"			Perhaps used for funerals
Caesarea Maritima	<i>War</i> 1.156, 408–16; 2.266; <i>Ant.</i> 14.76, 121; 15.293, 331–41; 16.136–41; 20.173	22–10	Herod's most ambitious urban design over Straton's Tower
Sebastos harbor			Project of international significance
Walls Roma & Augustus Stadium			Vaulted substructure Parallel to shoreline
Theater Promontory Palace Upper Palace		22 and onwards	On rocky outcrop
Panias Temple to Roma & Augustus	<i>War</i> 1.404–6; <i>Ant.</i> 15.363	After 20	Possibly located at Omrit
Jerusalem temple		23–15	See comments below

Walls, stoas, gates	<i>Ant.</i> 17.151, 259–63; <i>War</i> 1.416; 2.5	23 BCE–64 CE	Outer features mainly Roman in character
Holy place	<i>War</i> 1.401; <i>Ant.</i> 15.380–425; 17.162; 20.219–22; cf. <i>Pliny NH</i> 5.70		Naos mainly indigenous design
Royal basilica	<i>War</i> 5.184–227		Roman-style structure
Herodium Mausoleum	<i>War</i> 1.419–21		No unanimity on dating of mausoleum beside stairs
Jericho III	Strabo, <i>Geog.</i> 16.2.40	15	Palace spans wadi, between Jericho I and II

(d) Other Building Projects

Masada III Casemate Walls, etc.		ca. 15	
Bathyrā (Busr el-Hariri? Batir?)	<i>Ant.</i> 17.23–9 <i>Life</i> 55–61 [= Samamim?]	ca. 9–6?	Military settlement for veterans
Antipatris (Aphek)	<i>War</i> 1.417–18; <i>Ant.</i> 16.142–3; 11.329; 13.390	ca. 9?	Named for Herod's father, on site of Hellenistic Pegae
Phaselis (Kh. Fasayil)	<i>Ant.</i> 16.145; 17.189; 18.31; <i>War</i> 1.418; <i>Pliny NH</i> 12.44; 21.24	After 30	Named for Herod's brother
Agrippias (Anthedon)	<i>War</i> 1.87, 118, 416; <i>Ant.</i> 13.357; 14.9	15?	Named for friend M. Agrippa
Antioch, Cardo	<i>War</i> 1.425; <i>Ant.</i> 16.148, 427	30? 20?	New style of Cardo Maximus
Berytus, temple	<i>War</i> 1.422–5 <i>War</i> 1.422 [cf. <i>Ant.</i> 19.335 re Agrippa I]		Inscription alludes to three generations of family
Market Porticoes			Not identified
Byblos, walls	<i>War</i> 1.422		Not identified
Damascus, gymnasium	<i>War</i> 1.422		Not identified
Theater			City plan reflects shape of cavea

Table 9.1 (continued)

<i>(d) Other Building Projects</i>			
<i>Project</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>All dates BCE</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Laodicea (Latakya) aqueduct	War 1.422	36?	Not identified
Sidon, theater	War 1.422		Not identified
Tripolis (Trablus), gymnasium	War 1.422, 212		Not identified
Tyre, temple	War 1.422		Not identified
Market			Not identified
Porticoes			Not identified
Halls			Not identified
Rhodes, temple of Apollo	War 1.280, 387, 424; Ant. 15.183; 16.147; 14.378	Early 30s	No archaeological evidence of Herodian role at site
Chios, stoa	Ant. 16.18-20, 26		Inscription
Nicopolis, most of buildings	War 1.425; Ant. 16.147	20s?	Celebrating Augustus's victory at Actium
Delos, gymnasium			Inscriptional evidence
Elis/Olympia, restoration	War 1. 426-7; Ant. 16.149	12? 8?	Probably connected with naming as President for life
Athens, acropolis	War 1.425		Inscriptions, one found near temple of Roma & Augustus
Kos, gymnasium	War 1.423		Inscriptional evidence
<i>(e) From 1996 list, not noted above</i>			
David's Tomb	Ant. 16.179-84; 7.392-4; 16.188		Opened; rebuilt memorial at entrance
Herodium East (Kh. es-Samra)	War 1.41	After 30	

Jericho, theater & hippodrome (Tel es-Samrat)	War 1.659, 666; <i>Ant.</i> 17.271, 161, 175–8, 194	Late teens	Imaginative combination of two different building types
Betharamphtha (Tell er-Rama)	War 2.59, 168, 252; 4.438; <i>Ant.</i> 17.277; 18.27; 20.159; Pliny NH 13.44; Ptolemy <i>Geog.</i> 5.15.6; Eusebius <i>Onom.</i> 49.12; <i>j.</i> <i>Shebiti</i> 9.2		Unexcavated
Sephoris (Zippori)	War 2.56, 574; <i>Ant.</i> 17.271; 18.27		Evidence lacking; royal palace?
Ascalon	War 1.422; 2.98; <i>Ant.</i> 17.321		No agreement on structures, date
Heshbon/Eshbus (Hisban)	<i>Ant.</i> 15.294, 299; War 2.458; 3.47; Ptolemy <i>Geog.</i> 5.17	28–24?	
Trachonitis (?)		9–8	Settlement
Ptolemais (Akko) gymnasium	War 1.422		Not identified

(f) Aqueducts and Reservoirs

Solomon's Pools, with aqueducts to Jerusalem	War 5.145	Part Hasmonean Part Herodian Part P. Pilate Herodian	Three large reservoirs; two aqueducts to Jerusalem; one to Herodium Gathers run-off water, aqueduct to Hezekiah's Pool
Hezekiah's Pool, Jerusalem	Josephus, Amygdalon or pool of towers? War 5.408	Adapted by Herod?	Surrounded by buildings, near Jaffa Gate
Bethesda, Jerusalem Sheep Pool		?	Large double pool with street across middle
Struthion Pool, Jerusalem	War 5.467	Herodian?	Under Antonia Fortress
Pool of Israel, Jerusalem	John 5	Herodian	Beside north wall of temple; now filled in
Serpent's Pool, Jerusalem	War 5.108	Herodian	

Table 9.1 (continued)

(f) <i>Aqueducts and Reservoirs</i>			
<i>Project</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>All dates BCE</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Wadi Qelt		Herodian	Aqueducts serving Jericho palaces and Cypros
Phaselis		Herodian	Aqueduct
Alexandreion		Herodian	Water collection facility, aqueduct and cisterns
Macherus		Herodian	Aqueduct, syphon, cisterns
Hyrcania		Herodian	Aqueduct, bridge, large pool
Caesarea		Herodian	Aqueduct
Maritima			
Masada		Herodian	Aqueduct, extensive cisterns
(g) <i>Uncertain</i>			
Girtha	<i>War</i> 1.326; <i>Ant.</i> 14.450	?	Hasmonean
Agrippina (Belvoir)		? probably 1st c. CE	Fortress (at Belvoir?), unknown
Callirrhoe	<i>War</i> 1.657; <i>Ant.</i> 17.171–2; Pliny NH 5.72	? Herodian era	Hot spring at Dead Sea
Keren Naftali	No Herodian evidence	2nd c. BCE	Fort, besieged by Herod
Kh. El-Murak	No literary evidence	?	Netzer claims governor's villa

List of Herod's building projects: question marks indicate uncertainty; the dates proposed are "best guesses" in most cases, since the dates of construction are rarely indicated.

Herod's political trajectory can be mapped out in his building styles, starting with the first grouping of fortresses, compact, easily defended palaces, and his first palace on top of Masada. His second phase included expansive and lavish palaces, including one cascading down the cliff face of Masada, temples, and the entire port city of Caesarea Maritima. At some point Herod looked to the future and built two mausoleums, first in Jerusalem and then at his desert fortress-cum-palace, Herodium. In tracing Herod's building projects chronologically, we will paint in broad brushstrokes, emphasizing key buildings and features for closer examination, and highlighting events at the time of construction.



Figure 9.1 Herod's third Jericho palace, taken from an artificial mound with a gazebo—including a bath—on the top and garden and pool complex below. On the other side of the wadi, linked by a bridge, was the residential building. In the middle distance are the remains of an imaginative stadium-theater complex, and in the remote distance the pyramidal top of Alexandreion.

Establishment of the kingdom

The early years: building small, but luxuriously

Herod's earliest building projects are more correctly identified as the remodeling of existing structures. His focus was on rehabilitating Hasmonean fortresses, establishing a family tomb near Jerusalem, as well as building large enclosures at Hebron and Mamre, likely for commemorative purposes.

Herod's first project was probably the rehabilitation of a Hasmonean fortress at Alexandreion (Qarn el-Sartaba), a mountaintop overlooking the Jordan Valley in eastern Samaritis (see [Chapter 3](#) for Hasmonean use). He undertook the project with his brother Pheroras, while still fighting Mattathiah Antigonus over control of the region. Herod's work

at Alexandreion was a fairly straightforward renovation of an existing Hasmonean structure (Netzer 2008a, 204–6), so it has none of the hallmarks of Herod’s later building programs, except for a newly constructed peristyle courtyard, taking advantage of the view to the east.

As soon as Herod occupied Jerusalem he constructed a fortress/palace, of which few distinguishing features remain, named the Antonia after his new Roman patron, Mark Antony. It too was a renovation/rebuild of an existing Hasmonean fortress (Netzer 2008a, 121). Josephus’s descriptions (*War* 5.238–46; *Ant.* 15.403–9) are the main sources for understanding its reconstruction: it seems the Antonia was essentially a large rectangular structure, with a tower in each of the four corners, allowing it to loom over the temple to its south, making Herod’s presence in the city known. While excavations in the early twentieth century led to claims about physical remains of the Antonia (Vincent 1954), these claims were later refuted in the 1970s (Benoit 1971). Given the paucity of remains, it is best not to speculate too much, and instead assume it was a well-fortified structure with palatial spaces inside for the royal family. Netzer suggests that the place was similar to the fortress/palace at Herodium (Netzer 2008a, 124–6), the major difference being that the former was rectangular and the latter circular. The Antonia must have been constructed before Antony’s defeat at Actium.

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At about this time Herod turned his mind to the future and constructed a mausoleum for his family. A rising family needed a large and impressive tomb for the interment of its successive generations, some of whom had recently died. Josephus mentions a “monument” of Herod located in the greater Jerusalem area (*War* 5.108; 5.507), which scholars tend to interpret as referring to a mausoleum. At the time of construction Herod may have intended to be interred here along with his extended family, though he later changed his mind and built his own mausoleum at Herodium. The leading contender for this family tomb is outside the walls of Jerusalem, a large round structure northwest of the Damascus Gate (Netzer 2008a, 132). The Damascus Gate was the main gate into Jerusalem in Herod’s time; travelers approaching or leaving Jerusalem would have seen this structure looming above the city from afar. It consisted of two concentric circles; the larger outer wall’s interior face is constructed in *opus reticulatum* (Netzer 2008a, 132), a hallmark of Herodian architecture. Only foundations have survived, which have been covered over, but they suggest a structure reminiscent of other round mausoleums from the ancient Mediterranean world.

Herod then launched a refurbishment and rebuilding program of several desert fortresses, since his rule was not yet secure from external attack, especially from Nabatea (see [Chapters 4](#) and [6](#)). They were equipped with extensive water facilities, large cisterns, and storage rooms, allowing those inside to survive for long periods of time, if need be, while their assailants would be trapped in an inhospitable desert landscape. Several—Cypros, the first palace on Masada, Macherus, Hyrcania, and perhaps Docus/Dagon—combine fortresses with palatial areas and public spaces (see [Figures 9.2](#); 9.6; 11.4; 11.5; 11.6). All are set on the tops of hills and mountains, making them easily defensible and giving them superb vantage points over the surrounding terrain, able to signal each other, four of them rebuilt on the sites of earlier Hasmonean fortresses (see [Chapter 3](#)). Many had thought at Masada Herod must have built on an existing Hasmonean fortress, following Josephus's many statements regarding a Hasmonean presence on Masada (*War* 7.285; 1.237; 4.399; *Ant.* 14.296; and cf. Roller 1998, 187), but excavations have only uncovered Herodian remains (Netzer 1993, 111; reinforced in Netzer 2008a, 19; critique in Lichtenberger 1999, 21–4).

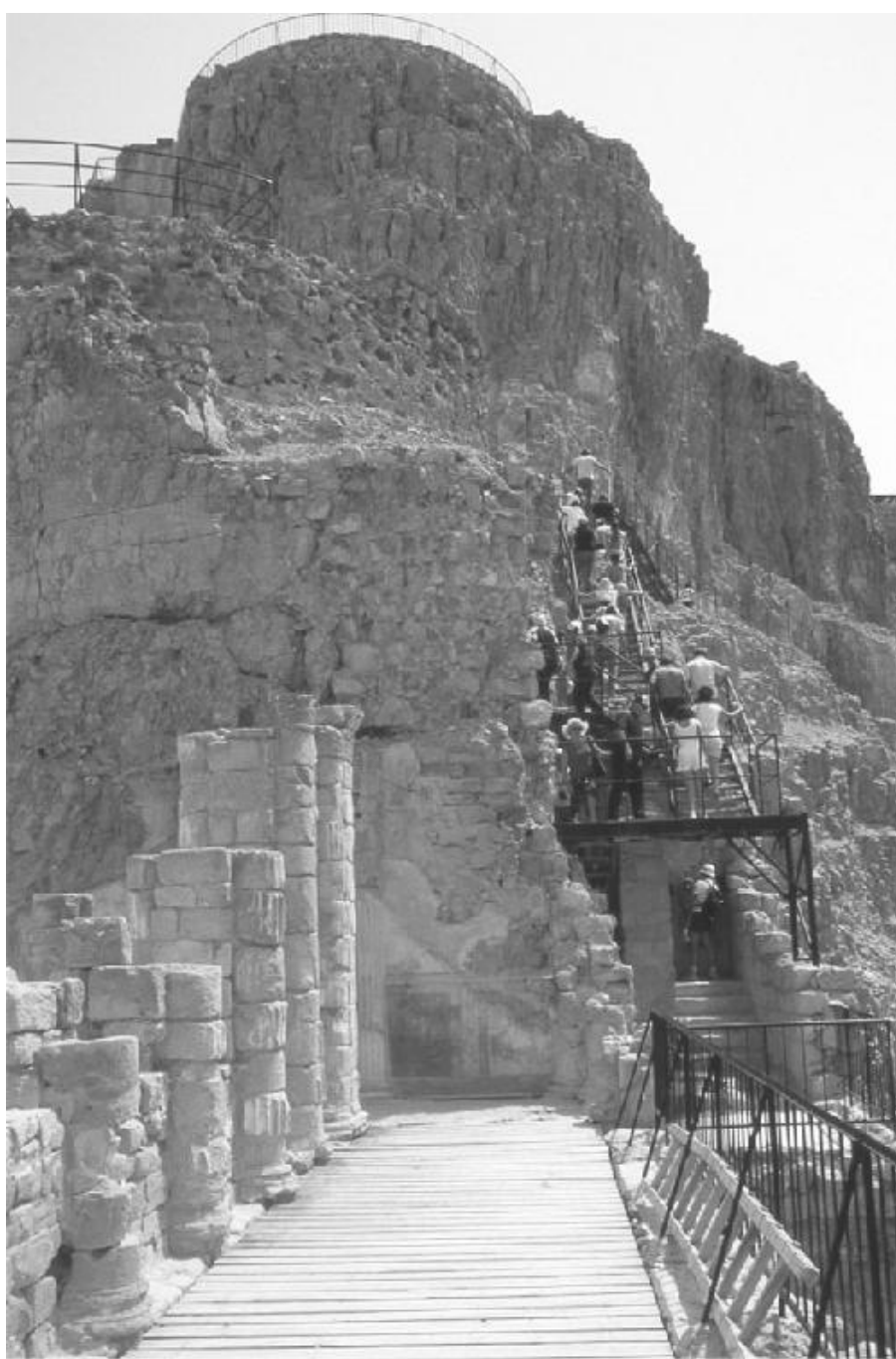


Figure 9.2 The Northern Palace is the most remarkable part of Masada, occupying more than 30 meters of a vertical knife-edge on three levels, with an enclosed stair. A rectangular lower level and a semicircular top level bracket a circular middle level, all taking advantage of the view north up the Rift Valley.

Some now think that Herod's father, Antipater, was the first to place fortifications on top of Masada (Meshel 2004, 43–50), which if true means that all of Herod's desert fortresses were remodeling and rebuilding projects. They form a chain along the southeastern border of Judea, crucial in the event of conflict with Nabatea. The farthest south is Masada, overlooking the Dead Sea; next is Macherus at the northeastern corner of the Dead Sea, then Hyrcania on a long and narrow hilltop in the northern Judean desert (see [Figure 11.4](#)); Cypros is perched on a conical hilltop above the plain of Jericho; and Docus overlooks the modern city of Jericho. The furthest north is Alexandreion, overlooking the Jordan Valley from a high mountain top (Netzer 2008a, 204–12). The Hasmoneans had built palatial wings into their fortresses, but Herod's renovations were always larger, grander, and with more luxurious features than the Hasmonean predecessors. Cypros and Macherus, for example, included Roman-style baths (Netzer 2008a, 208–11) and his first palace at Masada featured mosaic floors (Talgam & Peleg 2008, 379) and a Greek-style bath (Hoss 2005, 40–2). The enhanced luxury of these fortresses partially anticipates the later fully developed architectural style of Herodian buildings.

During this period Herod built his first palace at Jericho, where the Hasmoneans had their winter palaces (Netzer 1975). When Herod first arrived in 35 BCE the palace was still occupied by the Hasmoneans (Netzer 2008a, 45), so Herod built on the other side of the wadi, south of the Hasmonean compound and on a different orientation from their palaces. Herod's palace was less strategically placed than the Hasmonean compound, but was more a palace—more villa-like and less a fortress—than the Hasmoneans' collection of fortified palaces just across the wadi (Netzer 2008a, 45). This is somewhat curious, because about the same time he was building his first palace at Jericho, Herod had lost control of the region to Cleopatra, and was now paying her rent for his estate (*Ant.* 15.95). Since the Hasmoneans were on better terms with Cleopatra, they were able to keep their palaces there until an earthquake destroyed them in 31 BCE (Lichtenberger 1999, 60). Herod's decision to build a palace next to his chief rivals for power is quite striking: he apparently did not feel threatened, and clearly he intended to stay.

Despite lacking a militarily strategic placement and other more overt

fortifications, Herod's first palace at Jericho was in keeping with his other early building projects in several ways: it was a compact structure, rectangular in shape, featuring a large peristyle court, both Roman and Jewish-style baths, and a *triclinium*. The first excavator of the building identified it as a gymnasium, but Netzer's further exploration of the site and comparative work has shown that the building was Herod's first palace at Jericho (Netzer 1975, 93), a view generally accepted by scholars (Japp 2000, 121, however, suggests it was a well-to-do Judean's country villa). The architecture has been described as a Romanized Hellenistic style, in sharp contrast to the Eastern Hellenistic style of the Hasmonean palaces across the wadi (Lichtenberger 1999, 60). This Romanized Hellenistic style looks like Roman villas of the time, with colonnades, frescoed walls, and lush gardens with water features.

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The cultic buildings at Hebron and Mamre, located in what was then land occupied by Idumeans—although the area had been annexed to Judea by John Hyrcanus I—may also date from this early building period ([Chapter 1](#)). As discussed in [Chapter 2](#), we believe these structures were built by Herod prior to his remodeling of the temple in Jerusalem and served, in part, as *maquettes* of architectural details that would be used at the temple. Both were ancient cultic sites prior to Herod's monumental structures (at Hebron, shaft tombs dating from the Iron Age are below the structure). Mamre had long been associated with the patriarch Abraham, but the place also featured an ancient well. Herod's structure was a large rectangular open-air courtyard, which preserved this well in the southwestern corner, enclosed by a massive wall, 65 by 49 m. A monumental stairway in the center of the southern wall led to the main entrance, with a secondary entrance off-center in the northern wall. The paving stones, now in secondary usage in a Byzantine church at the site, are of similar size and form to those used in the temple in Jerusalem. The floor sloped slightly, so rainwater wouldn't pool in the enclosure (Magen 2003, 245–57).

Just down the road, at Hebron, was another ancient cult site associated with all the patriarchs (and matriarchs). Machpelah, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, was another rectangular enclosure, 59 by 34 m, also open-air, with a sloping paved floor, allowing for drainage. In contrast to Mamre, it appears that when constructed, this courtyard was not open to the general public; all four walls were solid—there were no visible doors (the present doorways are later). The architectural styles of both structures' ashlar walls and paving are reminiscent of the walls and paving that Herod installed at the temple in Jerusalem. Herod was

killing two birds with one stone: building monumental structures at ancient cult sites important to Judaism in Idumea and simultaneously trying out architectural techniques that he would later redeploy in his remodeling of the temple. If this is a correct deduction, Herod planned to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem years before he actually undertook it.

Thus, in this earliest phase of building from Jerusalem to Masada, Jericho to the Judean desert, and in Idumea, Herod's building projects were nearly all rebuilding projects at existing sites, with the focus on small and compact structures situated in strategic locations. While the structures at Hebron and Mamre were monumental in size, they were simple rectangular enclosed courtyards, not architecturally creative in their appearance, except for the external highly modulated wall surfaces. While the palaces and fortresses of this period featured luxurious touches, such as Roman-style baths, *triclinia*, mosaic floors, and pools, amongst other things, they do not yet exemplify key elements of Herod's later building program, with breathtaking architectural and technical innovations, some of the latter imported from Rome.



Figure 9.3 The memorial at Hebron—like another at nearby Mamre—is not attested as Herod’s in the literature, but there is near-universal assent that he built both, based on its masonry details, size, and character (cf. [Figure 11.2](#)). The structure, honoring patriarchs and matriarchs, was originally open-air,

The post-Actium building phase: expansion

Following his confirmation as king of Judea, Herod had a more secure grasp of power and a larger domain to govern. He quickly set to work with new and larger building projects and urban developments to mark this change. In the first ten years of his reign under Augustus, Herod built structures in Jerusalem, Sebaste, Jericho, Cypros, Masada, and Herodium, amongst other places. His building style changed from small-scale experiments with new styles and types of project to the first of his legacy works at Masada and Herodium. We will examine the latter projects in the next section; here we focus on his smaller post-Actium projects.

As with Herod's earlier fortress in Jerusalem, the Antonia, little survives of his palace. Indeed, while Josephus offers a rich description of this palace (*War* 5.176–81), little has been found in Jerusalem that corroborates his account. It seems likely that Herod's main residence in Jerusalem was razed long ago, possibly when Rome crushed the Jewish Revolt. Following Josephus's descriptions of the palace, most scholars place Herod's palace in the southwestern corner—the Armenian quarter—of the Old City (Bahat & Broshi 1972, 102–3; Amiran & Eitan 1972; Broshi & Gibson 2000). Parts of a monumental building's foundation have been found beneath the current structures along with rock cut steps located in a later moat that may have been part of a swimming pool (Netzer 2008a, 130). It is likely that subterranean vaults now visible in the citadel are parts of the substructures of Herod's palace (see [Figure 11.3](#)). In addition to these slender remains, Josephus describes the palace as having colonnaded ways, gardens, multiple water features, bronze statues, frescoed walls, and “pavilions” named for Herod's patrons, Augustus and Marcus Agrippa (*War* 1.402, 5.176–83; *Ant.* 15.318). Duane Roller notes that as Herod's palace at Jericho was modeled after Roman country villas, here in Jerusalem he modeled his palace after Roman townhouses (Roller 1998, 176).

Around this time Herod also built a hippodrome and a theater in Jerusalem, structures he would have also seen in Rome. No remains of these two structures have been located, and we only know of their existence from *Antiquities*; Josephus mentions a theater, a hippodrome,

and an amphitheater, but we agree with Netzer's interpretation that the hippodrome and the amphitheater were one and the same structure (Netzer 2008a, 135; see below, on Caesarea Maritima's hippodrome). Netzer proposes that the hippodrome would have been located in the south or southwest of the city, on an open plain (following Josephus's description of its location), which would have been an intelligent choice from a city-planning perspective. The theater would likely have been near the hippodrome, as the two together hosted quadrennial games (the *Kaisareia*) Herod established in honor of Augustus. Achim Lichtenberger proposes that the theater in Jerusalem was not built of stone (1999, 79), based on Josephus's description of the theater Herod built at Caesarea Maritima (see 265–73) as being *of stone*, whereas the theater in Jerusalem is not so described. This idea is also suggested by Joseph Patrich, who notes that theaters at this time in Rome were commonly of wood, not stone, construction; stone theaters, a Greek tradition, were only just starting to be acceptable in the city of Rome (Patrich 2002, 233–5; *contra* Weiss 2014). This would explain the complete lack of remains for the structure in Jerusalem. Perhaps both entertainment buildings were intended as temporary structures, rather than lasting monuments.

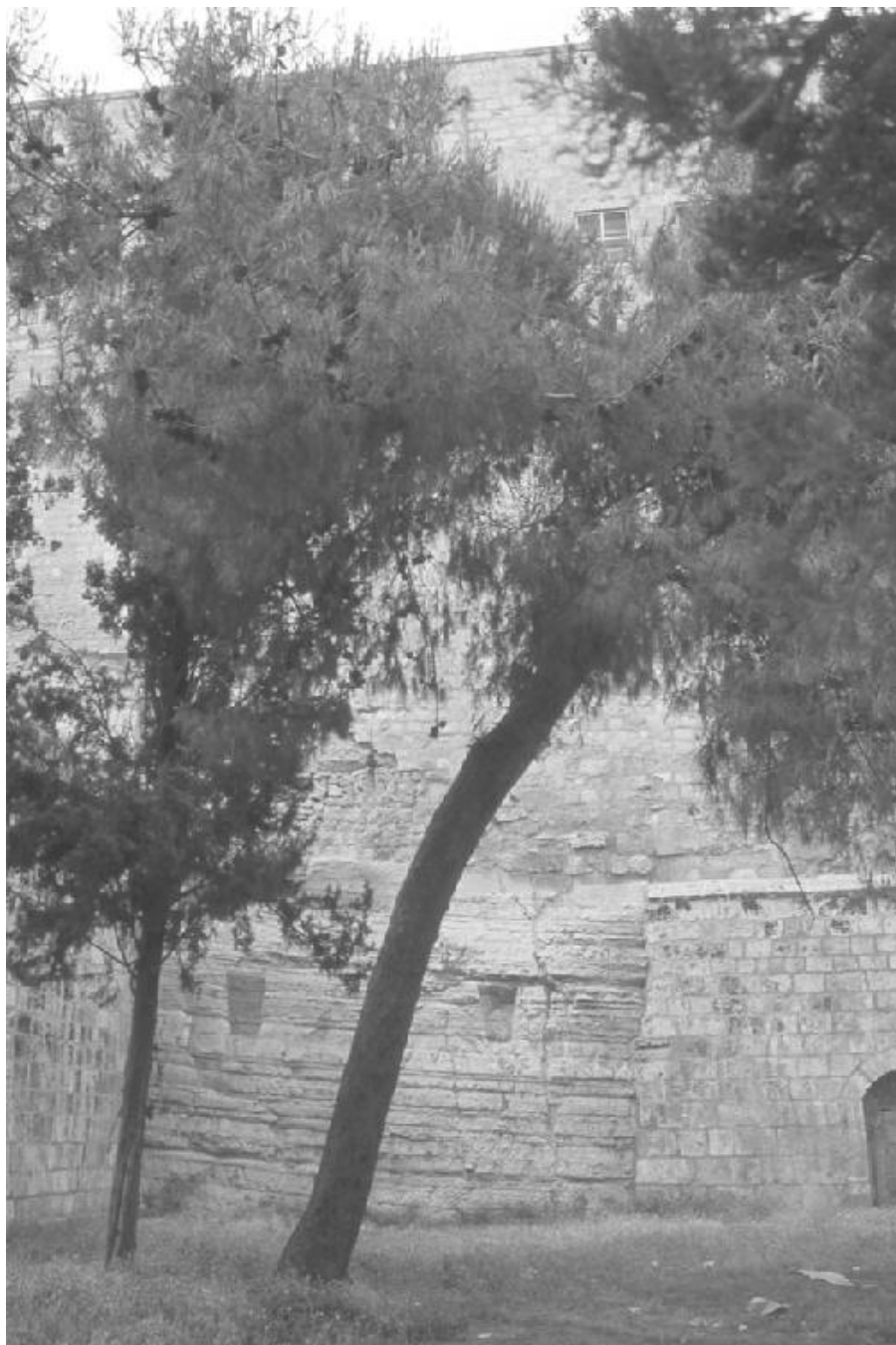


Figure 9.4 Herod had bedrock cut away at the northwest corner of today's Haram ash-Sharif to make room for the court of gentiles in his reconstruction of Judea's religious center. The Antonia fortress sat on the scarp thus created, now the site of the al-Omariya School. In the vertical face of the scarp,

trapezoidal-shaped recesses (soccles), visible on either side of the tree, attest the size and location of beams for the roof of a stoa.

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The first of the building projects in this period for which we have clear archaeological remains is Herod's reconstruction of the city of Samaria, renamed Sebaste, the Greek title of the emperor (*Ant.* 15.296–7; see [Chapter 4](#)). Samaria had not been part of Herod's domain prior to Augustus giving it to him in 30 BCE, so his decision to build there was likely an attempt to impress and (favorably) influence the mostly non-Jewish local populace. Sebaste, where he rebuilt the entire city core, was Herod's first massive civic project.

Samaria had been the Northern Kingdom of Israel's capital until the Assyrian conquest; following this, it served as the administrative seat for a series of empires' regional governments, adding diverse peoples from far-flung parts of these empires to the city's inhabitants. After Alexander the Great's conquest of the region, Macedonian soldiers were added to the mix of peoples there. When the Seleucids took over from the Ptolemies, they built a large fortress and new walls for the city. John Hyrcanus made sure to destroy this "Greek" city when he took it in 108 BCE ([Chapter 2](#)), but the Roman governor of Syria rebuilt the city in 55 BCE. This multi-ethnic, multi-faceted city that Herod inherited in 30 BCE was an appropriate setting for his first temple to Roma and Augustus, something he never could have done in exclusively Jewish sections of his domain. Jewish rebels destroyed the city in 66 CE, and the Severans rebuilt it many years later, so Herod's first city project is difficult to reconstruct (see cover, [Figures 5.2, 8.4](#)).

Archaeological evidence of Sebaste includes the foundations of Herod's temple to Roma and Augustus, situated on the acropolis of the ancient city. The temple complex was constructed on a large walled and elevated terrace, about 4 m higher than the earlier city, built on top of a natural hill. This terrace was surrounded by a retaining wall, which featured irregularly shaped towers at the corners (Reisner et al. 1924, 167–70; Crowfoot et al. 1942, 127). The *naos* was built on the highest part of the natural hill, making it 4 m higher than the forecourt, which meant the temple was not only the highest point in the complex, but the highest point in the whole city and a landmark in the surrounding landscape, with a monumental staircase giving access to the *naos* from the forecourt, though little of this staircase remains now. The forecourt, which was separated from the retaining wall of the terrace by a narrow

building and a street, would have been just over 2 m higher than the street in the time of Herod, making steps down from it necessary; the surviving Severan-period steps must be replacements for earlier Herodian ones (Reisner et al. 1924, 168, 174).

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The foundations allow a tentative reconstruction of the temple as Herod constructed it: a temple measuring 23.95 m by 34.9 m, with a cross wall that divided the portico from the cella, and extended to form the northern wall of the cella, which was split into thirds by two walls running north-south (Reisner et al. 1924, 177). Two different reconstructions for the *naos* of the temple have been proposed, both plausible given that we only have the foundations with which to work. The original excavators proposed an open large *naos*, with a central hall flanked by side aisles formed by rows of interior columns (Reisner et al. 1924, 177), a reconstruction favored by Dan Barag (Barag 1993, 7). Netzer, while admitting that the first reconstruction would work, prefers a reconstruction with a smaller *naos*, surrounded by colonnades, noting the proposed intercolumniation matches other known classical colonnades (Netzer 2008a, 87); Barag counters that the style of temple Netzer proposes was rare in the Hellenistic Near East and thus an unlikely choice (Barag 1993, 17, n. 9). The structure was roofed with red tiles.

The construction of Roma's forecourt was more massive and formidable than the construction of the temple itself, extending north from the temple, with the altar at the south end in front of the grand staircase leading up to the *naos*. The forecourt had colonnades on the eastern and western sides; these likely turned the corners and formed a partial colonnade on the northern end of the forecourt with a formal entrance in the center (Reisner et al. 1924, 170). The courtyard itself is built out onto the artificial platform Herod had constructed to accommodate such a massive structure, which is supported in turn by a series of subterranean walls encased in earth and stone arches, helping to support the weight of the colonnade above it (Reisner et al. 1924, 171-3; Crowfoot et al. 1942, 123-7). This understory is similar to the substructures of Jerusalem's temple and Herod's palace, as well as Caesarea Maritima's Temple of Roma and Augustus. The real architectural feats at Sebaste were not visible to ancient visitors to the city.

Several buildings, whose purpose is not entirely clear, surround the temple, the two most developed being the Atrium House and the Apsidal

Building, names applied by the original excavators (Reisner et al. 1924, 169). In addition to these two buildings, a possible bathhouse and several storerooms were located on the acropolis and within the retaining wall (Netzer 2008a, 82). The rectangular Atrium House is west of the temple, with a peristyle courtyard in its center, a mosaic floor with a simple black and white pattern in one room, and bathing facilities in the eastern portion of the building. The walls of the courtyard and the interior walls appear to have been covered in stucco colored white, black, red, yellow, olive green, purple, and pink. The house takes up most of the space between the temple and the retaining wall of the acropolis, with narrow streets less than 2 m wide on its east and west sides (Reisner et al. 1924, 180–5). The Apsidal Building is 2 m south of and behind the temple, separated by a narrow road. It is strangely positioned, off-kilter and thus trapezoidal in shape. An apse on the southern side terminates a “great hall” that takes up most of the center of the building and is surrounded by smaller rooms. Because the building has been robbed out, only traces of some walls remain (Reisner et al. 1924, 180).

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While the original excavators do not comment on the use of these buildings, the second expedition suggests the buildings were used as housing for the priests of the temple (Crowfoot et al. 1942, 127), a good functional possibility. Dan Barag argues that these were Herod’s “castles” at Sebaste (Barag 1993, 3, 15–16), an idea also championed by Andreas Kropp, who sees parallels between the layout of Augustus’s palace/temple compound on the Palatine and Herod’s villa/temple compound at Samaria/Sebaste (Kropp 2013, 321). Kropp’s vision of the city as Herod’s mini Rome is based in large part on the very Roman portions of Severan-era Sebaste, leading to his interpretation of the acropolis as homage to the Palatine. The “Roman” Severan city may be a rebuilding of Herod’s original vision, but excavations have not supported Kropp’s view that the acropolis was a little Palatine in Herod’s little Rome; we have no evidence of a little Rome under Herod.



Figure 9.5 Herod's third palace at Jericho spanning the Wadi Qelt used *opus reticulatum* on both halves: on the south bank in the garden facilities and on the north bank in the bath complex. This wall construction technique, probably brought in by Roman workmen, is also found in Herod's (presumed) family tomb in Jerusalem and in a structure near the Panias caves.

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Netzer's observation is correct: the construction and amenities of these adjacent buildings are not up to Herod's standard (Netzer 2008a, 91). He notes that while there are similarities between the compound at Masada and the one on the acropolis at Sebaste, Masada's layout is logical, whereas Sebaste's appears haphazard, functional rather than royal (Netzer 2008a, 92). Local workers probably built these villas for local high-ranking people, possibly local priests or local leaders left in charge by Herod or members of Herod's family. As Sebaste remains only partially excavated, we do not know if there was a still unexcavated palace for Herod; until such a structure is located, doubt will remain over the exact use and purpose of the villas inside the acropolis.

Two other notable features of Herod's reconstruction of Sebaste are the city's wall and the stadium. The wall is memorable mainly for its length, about 3700 m, enclosing the entire Herodian-era city of approximately 75 hectares. While in places the new wall followed the earlier city walls, Herod greatly expanded its overall reach, ensuring that

the stadium and the neighborhoods surrounding it were in the city proper (Netzer 2008a, 84). The impressive circular towers at the western gate, likely the main entrance to the city, are usually and probably correctly interpreted as Herodian (though the colonnaded street leading east is late Roman; Crowfoot et al. 1942, 52), yet their masonry resembles Hellenistic masonry in comparable constructions. Sebaste's towers, the similar towers at the north end of the *cardo maximus* in Caesarea Maritima, and the towers at the south end of the *cardo* in Tiberias are all controversial.

While Josephus's brief description of Herod's additions to Sebaste does not mention a stadium, there is a structure in the city whose length is 600 Olympic feet, or one *stade*, the Olympic requirement for a foot race, suggesting to the original excavators and to us that the structure was a stadium (Crowfoot et al. 1942, 49; Netzer 2008a, 92). This stadium, never entirely lost from view but never fully excavated, was the city's largest structure (Crowfoot et al. 1942, 41–2), rectangular in shape, 205 m by 67 m on the exterior and 193 m by 55 m on the interior (Netzer 2008a, 92). A colonnade of Doric columns backed by a rear wall surrounded the track, whose shoddy workmanship was originally covered by thick plaster painted in bright red and yellow panels (Crowfoot et al. 1942, 42).

At Sebaste-Samaria we have Herod's first attempt at a full city reconstruction, featuring new walls, a temple situated for visibility, but within a walled compound, and a stadium for entertaining the local population. Such facilities would also have served Herod's new settlement at Pente Komai (Fondaquma), immediately north of the city, providing accommodation and allotments for some of his veterans, placed strategically beside the main north–south road (*Ant* 15.296).

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Shortly after he started rebuilding Sebaste, Herod started new projects at both Jericho and Cypros. Cypros was another expansion and remodeling of an existing structure, on a dramatic hilltop that overlooked Jericho; Josephus refers to it as the “citadel” of Jericho. It is interesting mainly to demonstrate how several of Herod's projects at fortresses included palatial wings outside, contrasting in character with the main structures whose origins were Hasmonean. In the cases of both Cypros and Alexandreion, the addition was on a small plateau at a lower level, more open to its surrounding landscape. The larger project, on which we will focus, was at Jericho, which was, in certain respects, similar to the first palace at Jericho. Having convinced Octavian to

confirm him as king and with Cleopatra out of the way, Herod regained full control of Jericho and built himself a large, open palace over the ruins of the Hasmonean buildings, which, fortuitously for Herod, an earthquake had destroyed in 31 BCE.

Herod's second palace at Jericho shows his shift in mindset after Actium. This was another "remodeling" project of an older Hasmonean site, but this time Herod was building directly on top of their former palace complex, across the wadi from his first palace at Jericho. Herod's palace, rather than putting up barriers against the world outside as the Hasmonean complex had, was designed to welcome in and be a part of the surrounding landscape. In part this was possible thanks to the palace's superior location, with somewhat better views across the Jericho plain and down to the Dead Sea. Herod landscaped the area around the new palace, creating a lush garden setting, in effect an artificial oasis around several pools. He built a terraced garden on the edge of his new palace compound over what was left of the Hasmoneans' Twin Palaces, replacing the Hasmonean plaza by a formal garden, with trees and bushes set into the ground in ceramic pots, making their removal or rearrangement quite easy (Netzer 2008a, 50).

A focus on landscaping continued inside the palace, which was laid out in two wings, the main wing in the north and the lower wing in the south. The main wing of the palace was built around a large courtyard with colonnades on all four sides and a large garden in the center, unique in being situated 80–90 cm above the pedestrian walks of the colonnades (Netzer 2008a, 52); Netzer suggests that elevating the garden was an attempt to bring the flora of the garden to the eye level of those walking through the colonnaded way. On the south side of this courtyard garden was a hall decorated in frescos, in Netzer's view a reception room and *triclinium*, which afforded diners splendid views both to the north, with a large window looking out on the courtyard garden, and to the south, where a large doorway leading to a balcony would allow visitors to gaze upon the southern part of the Jericho Plain and the Wadi Qelt (Netzer 2008a, 52). Herod's guests could take in simultaneously the natural desert landscape and a lush and verdant, if domestic, scene. The bedroom suites for the palace appear to have been located on either side of the dining room and had direct access to the balcony and its views.



Figure 9.6 Herod's complete rebuilding of Macherus, on the Nabatean border, included a large peristyle courtyard using both Doric and Ionic orders. Two *triclinia* (dining rooms) plus an apsidal throne room opened onto the courtyard, with an adjacent bath complex, storerooms, and towers.

Herod borrowed the view from the Hasmoneans' palace as well as their swimming pools, altering and adapting the structures to his own use. To the northwest of the palace compound were two pools, originally built by Alexander Janneus; Herod remodeled the two pools as a single massive pool, 32 by 18 m. He left the stairways into both pools intact, allowing guests to walk into the pool from either end (Netzer 2008a, 50). Half the lower wing of the palace contained another Hasmonean swimming pool. While Herod did not alter the pool, he rebuilt the perimeter, creating colonnades on all four sides to shade the bathers (Netzer 2008a, 53). This lower wing of the palace is mostly a pool and bathhouse. Herod installed a third pool beneath the south-facing balcony of the main wing and west of the lower wing, surrounded by a formal garden, serving a double purpose of swimming pool and decorative water feature for those looking down from the balcony above (Netzer 2008a, 54).

With its emphasis on landscaping, vistas, and water features, Herod's second palace at Jericho marks a stark change in his building style from his pre-Actium days of compact and inwardly facing buildings. Yet despite its lush setting, this palace was still a rebuilding of a Hasmonean

site; it is only in his next building projects that one sees fully Herod's architectural imagination.

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Figure 9.7 A statue base found in the porch of a temple to Ba'al Shamim at Si'a in Auranitis in the mid-nineteenth century, now lost, had an inscription honoring Herod, implying it may have been an early project (extent unknown). The shepherd's hut on the ridge sits on its foundations. With the addition of a temple to Dushara and an unidentified temple, it was an important three-temple complex, linked to Canatha (Qanawat) by a sacred way.

Creation of a legacy

Masada: the cascading palace

Herod's architectural creativity is seen best in the Northern Palace at Masada, his last and most impressive palace at Masada, if not in his whole kingdom. He began work on the Northern Palace around the same time that he began construction at Herodium, and shortly before he started work at Caesarea Maritima. It cascaded down the northern slope of Masada, creating an impressive "first glimpse" for travelers

coming along the Dead Sea from Jericho. Not only is the palace itself stunning, but the engineering that undergirds it is quite impressive. While the table top of Masada has three descending tiers on the northern side, Herod's engineers had to sculpt and shape the mountain to accommodate his palace on these levels (Netzer 2008a, 29). In addition to sculpting the mountain, they built substructures to support the palace. While only three "stories," the Northern Palace is an ancient skyscraper, having a height of nearly 33 m from the bottom terrace to the top terrace. Circulation between these stories was gained through a staircase on the western side. Access to the complex was restricted, with only two doors into a courtyard, from which visitors gained access to the upper terrace (see [Figure 9.2](#)).

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The upper terrace consisted of a large rectangular reception hall, and four bedrooms on the southern side, closest to the rest of Masada. The bedrooms—two suites of two bedrooms each with corridors between them—were on either side of the reception hall, and the whole was paved in geometric mosaics. The northern half of the upper terrace was a semicircular balcony, surrounded by a pergola with a double colonnade, which opened off the southern hall; its center section, open to the sky, may have contained a garden, though no trace remains now.

A staircase led from the pergola's western end down to the middle terrace of the palace (Netzer 2008a, 30), designed around a circular reception hall in the middle, surrounded by a single colonnade. In the southeast corner were two rooms, one of which opened onto the reception hall; along the southern wall, five niches may have been intended to display some small collection. It is possible that there was a second story above these two rooms, but it does not survive. A footpath from the middle terrace led out onto the western slope, where there was a cistern and a stepped pool—possibly a *mikveh*. A short staircase on the southwest led to a double stair down to the lowest terrace (Netzer 2008a, 31).

The lowest level comprised an almost square central hall with a colonnade, whose walls were decorated by engaged columns with windows between the columns. The wall's exterior also had engaged columns, mirrored in the colonnade by full columns except on the southern side, which was built into the rock face. That side consisted of two sets of engaged columns facing each other. The columns, whether engaged or freestanding, were built of small pieces of local sandstone, covered in stucco to create the fluting. They featured Corinthian capitals

and Attic bases, a mix of styles Herod used elsewhere, for example at Caesarea Maritima. The pedestals of the hall columns made them taller than the colonnade. Netzer suggests that this allowed clerestory windows to let light flood into a space that would otherwise be quite dark. On the east, below the hall, was a small two-story unit, the top story being even with the hall and the bottom story being farther down the cliff face. The top floor had two small rooms, perhaps guest bedrooms, and the lower floor a small but complete Roman bath (Netzer 2008a, 31–2).

In addition to the two baths in the palace—on the lower and middle terraces—Herod constructed a large bathhouse on top of Masada, separate from the Northern Palace but close to its entrance and on nearly the same axis, featuring bright-colored frescoed walls and mosaic floors of black and white *tesserae*. Its location allowed access to those from the Western Palace or other mansions on top of Masada without having to enter the Northern Palace, the domain of the king (Netzer 2008a, 32).

In this phase at Masada, Herod was at the peak of his architectural creativity. Not only did he provide for his guests, making sure no luxury was missing despite the inhospitable terrain that surrounded the site, but the design of the palace itself was very impressive, as he bent nature to his will, allowing his vision to become a reality. This idea of shaping the terrain to suit his architectural designs was one that would be even more prominent in his project at the site of Herodium.

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Herodium: fortress and palace

The first site that was truly and completely Herod's own he named after himself, Herodium; the site, in the middle of the Judean desert, was completely undeveloped when Herod's architects arrived, with no prior structure, Hasmonean or otherwise (see [Figure 1.1](#)). But it was close to the site where he fought (and won) a battle against Mattathiah Antigonus and the Parthians, before heading to Rome to seek Rome's help in fending off Parthia. Josephus says that Herod's mother had met with a terrible accident as they were fleeing Jerusalem, when her chariot overturned. In his grief Herod nearly committed suicide. Thus, the site was full of meaning for Herod, marking the site where he had nearly lost his mother and his own life. Instead he triumphed over Mattathiah Antigonus and death itself. Perhaps this is the reason Herod wished to

be buried near this site, with a monument to ensure his memory not be lost. That his monument still stands, under its modern name of Jebel Fureidis, still visible on a clear day from Jerusalem, demonstrates his resilience.

The battle took place in an open expanse on the edge of the desert, perfect for two armies to meet but inimical to Herod's usual practice of situating his projects in stunning locations. Having built a family tomb in Jerusalem, it seems odd to place his tomb there; by eschewing the burial grounds of Jerusalem's elite, Herod was able to "go big." Herodium had the added advantage of being situated in the borderland between Judea and Idumea; it was close enough to Jerusalem to reach easily, but located in an area reliably supportive of Herod, making the location for his extensive pleasure palace and burial monument a more intelligent choice than it would at first appear. Still, Herod had his work cut out for him.

He solved the problem of the site that was not a site by selecting the tallest hill and building a large round fortified palace on it, visible from the outskirts of Jerusalem 12 km away. He then built a large summer palace compound below the Upper Palace, all built on the same axes. Herod was putting Herodium on the map, so to speak, both visually and politically. Not only could people in Jerusalem see this building; the elite would be vying for invitations to see this sumptuous oasis retreat in the desert. He may also have relocated the toparchy's capital from Beth Zur (Kh. et-Tubeiqa) to Herodium, instantly gaining the staff to administer and run his new complex.

Herodium was not part of the chain of Hasmonean fortified palaces taken over and improved by Herod. While Herod (or possibly Antipater, his father) appears to have been the first to build at Masada—usually included amongst the desert fortresses—the strategic and defensive logic behind that compound is clear. By contrast, neither Herodium's location nor its design is particularly logical for a defensive structure: the Lower Palace is completely exposed and there is no local water source to service it. Aqueducts brought water from a spring 5 km away, near Solomon's Pools (Netzer 2008a, 180; Mazar 2002, 243–44). In the Upper Palace three reservoirs built into the natural hill beneath the Upper Palace were designed to collect runoff rainwater from the slope above them. A smaller cistern near the top of the original hill was filled by water carriers, who hauled the water up the stairs from the main cisterns; this smaller cistern was in a room with a hole in the roof, so palace servants could draw water up into the main palace (Netzer 2008a, 188). It could have withstood a lengthy siege.

The external character of the fortress was designed in part for appearance, but also for defense. It appears that when first built and used, the fortress stood exposed to the world, on top of the natural hill, with the addition of a glacis wall, some 4 or 5 m tall, built of cut ashlar, which encircled its base to aid in its defense (Netzer et al. 2013, 85). Access to the fortress was probably via several winding paths that led up to different points of entrance, but this remains uncertain because of later reshaping of the site and its access points (Netzer et al. 2013, 102).

The fortified palace on the natural hilltop consisted of a large round casing—which contained the palace—with towers on the four cardinal points. The casing was 63 m in diameter from outer edge to outer edge, made of two thick parallel walls, just over 3 m apart; at the time of its completion it was about 30 m in height. This circular casing had seven stories, all of which appear to have served as storage facilities and/or passageways; none appear to have been used as living space. Only the lowest three survive in situ; the other four have had to be reconstructed. The bottom two stories were barrel-vaulted cellars, completely underground, supporting the five floors above (Netzer 2008a, 183), which were designed as passageways that allowed one to circle through the fortress without entering the main palace and could double as additional storage space for supplies. Eventually dirt was piled up around the casing to create the appearance of an artificial mound.

The north, south, and west towers were semicircular, while the eastern tower was circular, with a solid base rising 20 m or so above the elevation of the natural hill, on which the casing rested. Above this base all that survives are the remains of two floors: the lower floor contained a cistern, built down into the solid base, and storage rooms, while above there is evidence of the tower being divided into rooms (Netzer 2008a, 186). Netzer, however, believes that the cistern and storage level was not the penultimate story in the eastern tower, but that there ought to have been several more stories above it, making the tower at its full height some 25 m. If this were the case, the tower would be of similar height to the towers Herod built next to his Jerusalem palace (Phasaël, Hippicus, and Mariamme). Thus, the total number of stories on top of the solid tower base may have been five, with the top three or four serving as a mini royal retreat with elaborate and costly rooms, all of which would benefit from stunning views of the surrounding landscape as well as breezes that would be blocked from the main palace inside the casing, making it a particularly attractive location during the summer months

Netzer further suggests that this tower's roof could have been used as a lookout (Netzer 2008a, 186). His reconstruction is, however, based on Josephus's description of the towers Herod built in Jerusalem and remains partly speculative. In contrast to the eastern tower, the three semicircular towers were hollow from bottom to top. It is not clear whether these towers were taller than, the same height as, or lower than the outer casing. It appears that when they were first built these towers were empty half-round shafts, but soon after they were remodeled into multiple stories, each story divided into four rooms. Most likely the lowest levels were used as storage rooms, while the higher levels served as sleeping quarters for the staff and guards of the compound (Netzer 2008a, 186).



Figure 9.8 Omrit: The site of Herod's Temple of Roma and Augustus at Panias is controversial. A recent proposal is a multi-stage temple at Omrit, connected with Panias by a road (illustrated here, looking northwest at the main stairs to the façade and beyond that the Huleh Valley). Other suggestions locate the temple in front of the Pan-caves at Panias, or on a plateau

In the center of the circular casing were the living spaces of the king and his entourage, an orthogonal palace shoehorned into a circular form. The western half contained the royal living space, with its northern part being a Roman-style bathhouse, with mosaic floors, frescoed walls, and the full suite of rooms: two *apodyteria* at the entrance, *caldarium*, *frigidarium*, and *tepidarium*. The *frigidarium* was misshapen because of the larger round space it was fitted into. The *tepidarium* had a domed roof of cut stone with an oculus in the top, the earliest yet found in Palestine (Netzer 2008a, 187), an odd place to experiment with a new architectural technique. In the middle of the western half of the palace were the bedrooms and royal living quarters; some had a second story above them, increasing the living space available to the king and his entourage. In the southern part of the western half of the palace was the formal dining room, a Roman-style *triclinium*, about 15 m by 10 m (see [Figure 9.12](#)).

The eastern half of the palace was a large courtyard with colonnades on three sides, and a wall with engaged columns on the eastern side to hide the projecting round eastern tower that prevented a full colonnade on that side. Soil was brought in and spread over the whole of the open courtyard area to create a garden (Netzer 2008a, 187) so Herod and his guests could enjoy nature from windows in the living areas or from the colonnades.

On the northern slope of the palace Herod had a small theater built to entertain his guests, perhaps part of the original plans for Herodium, though it was used only briefly. The theater itself was built in the Roman style, with a stage featuring a *scaenae frons*, and a semicircular *cavea*, divided into two tiers of six rows each. It seems likely that guests of higher caliber and palace guards were seated in the top half of the theater and people of lower rank in the bottom half. While the theater had entrances for both tiers of seats, the king and his entourage were able to enter the theater through a private entrance directly from the palace into a royal reception room perched on the top of the theater's seating.

This royal reception room was open at the front, looking out toward the stage, though it is too high to have watched plays from; instead it seems the king and his favored guests used this room before the performance and during intermission. The reception room was

exceptional for the lavish decoration of its stucco walls, with rich paintings in both fresco (paint applied to wet plaster) and secco (paint applied to dry plaster) techniques, the latter being used for the most impressive part of the decoration.

The walls were divided into vertical bands, separated by orange pedestals with protruding white plaster pilasters above. Between the pilasters each wall section was further divided horizontally, with the lowest register black and the middle register painted in panels of wine red and orange (Rozenberg 2013, 176–9). The largest panels of each wall section were kept white to showcase a set of small pictures painted in secco on the walls. These were *pinakes*, a sort of ancient *trompe l’oeil* style, which presented pictures as though they were “hanging” on the wall with painted nails, string, and painted open wooden shutters revealing the scenes within painted wooden frames.

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This style of painting was common in the late-Second and early-Third style Pompeian wall painting, of which the surviving examples from Italy all postdate 20 BCE (Rozenberg 2013, 179). The Herodium examples, however, are different from traditional Roman *pinakes* in their choice of images, for the artists have mixed another style—illusionary outdoor scenes popular in the late-Second and early-Third style—with the *pinakes* style. According to Rozenberg, this hybridization of two different painting styles is “exceptional” (Rozenberg 2013, 187). Looking through the frames, the viewer gazes out of the royal room into a series of seemingly unrelated nature scenes. While this style of landscape painting was popular at the same time as *pinakes*, since *pinakes* were “fake” pictures, they usually consisted of still life, mythological, or theater scenes (Rozenberg 2013, 179).

Despite being landscapes, there are figurative images; one “sacred landscape” has an altar, animals, buildings, and boat sailing on a river (the Nile?); another has a scene of sailing ships, filled with soldiers; and another features a Nilotic scene with a crocodile on the riverbank. The presence of figurative images is surprising. Presumably Herod felt that his out-of-the-way pleasure palace was sufficiently removed from the public eye that he could decorate it with images unacceptable elsewhere in the kingdom. A fragment of a wall painting from the royal room features two wreathed men reclining, presumably at a banquet, and there are reports of wall paintings of waterfowl in the *tepidarium* of the bathhouse in Upper Herodium, though those images do not survive. Access to both these rooms would have been tightly controlled.

Given the unpopularity of figurative art in his kingdom—though there is evidence of birds in an elite Jerusalem house—it seems unlikely that Herod could have found local artists skilled enough to execute these tiny paintings. He probably had to bring in artists from abroad to finish the decorating at Herodium, perhaps from Rome, or, more likely according to the excavators, Alexandria (Kahanov et al. 2015, 262, 269). This would explain the use of secco, as well as the Hellenistic-style banquet scene and the Nilotic scenes, all traits of the Alexandrian school of wall painting at the time. As Rozenberg points out, following the Battle of Actium the artists of Antony and Cleopatra’s court in Alexandria would have been without a patron and in need of work (Rozenberg 2013, 188), which a new patron such as Herod could provide.

The decorations that survive, including the *pinakes*, date to a somewhat hasty remodeling of this royal room, likely in an attempt to spruce it up for some reason. The excavators suggest a date around 16 or 15 BCE, in preparation for Marcus Agrippa’s visit to Herod’s kingdom (Netzer et al. 2013, 157), which may explain both the presence of figurative art and the thematic content. The scene of ships carrying soldiers may be a reference to the Battle of Actium, intended to honor its victorious general, Marcus Agrippa (Kahanov et al. 2015, 269). The sacred landscape could be read as a reference to the beginning of Augustus’s rule, and the Nilotic scene—with a crocodile and a palm tree, known from coins—may commemorate the victory over Antony and Cleopatra (Rozenberg 2013, 189).

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The theater must have been built by the late 20s BCE at least and then refurbished to make it look pristine for Marcus Agrippa, but it did not survive long after this visit, for Herod apparently decided late in his reign to remodel Upper Herodium, to further monumentalize his place of burial. This renovation of the whole site necessitated the destruction of the theater, which may suggest Herod was contemplating the site’s primary function as his mausoleum.

In marked contrast, Lower Herodium was a sprawling complex of palaces, pools, and formal gardens, extending over approximately 15 hectares, centered on a large pool, surrounded by an extensive formal garden. A large palace, Roman-style bath, and a monumental building of some sort completed the compound. The features of the garden-pool, which resonate with those of Araq al-Emir (Netzer 2000; see [Figure 7.5](#)) and Petra and, beyond those, of Persian garden-pool complexes, made good sense since Upper Herodium lacked a pool or water feature. The

large pool was not only for recreation, but also served as a water reservoir for irrigation, 69 by 45 m and 3 m deep. In the middle was a round artificial island with a *tholos*-like pavilion. When the pool was full the pavilion would have appeared to float on the water's surface. Netzer suggests that small boats would have been used to reach this pavilion (Netzer 2008a, 190). To the east of this pool stretched a large formal garden, 57 by 110 m. Gardens on the other three sides were 18 m wide, beyond which were colonnades about 5 m wide. Like the colonnades at Jericho, these would have given bathers a place to retreat from the sun, or allowed someone to enjoy the view of the gardens and water while sheltered from the elements.

Along the east side of the garden a two-story hall served as a retaining wall for the fill on which the garden was built. Its second story was at the garden level, and the first story was a well-lit basement, with windows looking out to a large orchard on the east, located in an old wadi bed and irrigated with water from the large pool. A matching one-story hall was built behind the western colonnade centered on an octagonal hall (Netzer 2008a, 191). North, south, and west of the colonnades and the western hall lay the rest of Lower Herodium; there is no evidence of Herodian building beyond the orchards.

A small building west of the pool complex—of which only the north and south ends have been excavated—contained stables and storage rooms in the northern section, while the southern section featured the main bathhouse for Lower Herodium. This bathhouse was renovated during Herod's life to include an indoor heated pool and a round open-air swimming pool in the *palaestra* (its main courtyard). A door between this and the heated pool allowed a bather to swim indoors or outdoors, depending on the weather. The renovation featured a new circular *caldarium* set into a square space with niches in the four sides, one with a bathtub, two with windows, and one for the entrance. The remains of a large marble *labrum* (a stone water basin) dating stylistically to the Augustan period were recovered; its handles depicted the Greek demigod Selinus, another rare iconic piece. Netzer suggests this *labrum* was a gift from Marcus Agrippa following his visit in 15 BCE, and that the *caldarium* was redesigned in the round to showcase the *labrum* at its center (Netzer 2008a, 194).

Lower Herodium is not nearly as well studied as Upper Herodium, and many of its buildings are enigmatic. For example, the only significant surviving remains of its largest building, the so-called “large

palace” at the base of Upper Herodium’s slope, are the substructure’s two large underground vaults that run the length of the building in its northern half; its southern half was filled with dirt. That it relates architecturally to Upper Herodium is deduced from its sharing the same axis as the palace above it (Netzer 2008a, 195).

North of the large palace and south of the orchards are the remains of a lengthy terrace, terminating in a slightly curved line. It begins at the so-called Monumental Building, part of the pool complex. We will explore these last two structures in the section below on Herodium as mausoleum.

Caesarea Maritima: city on the sea

Just as Herod built his pleasure palace a good distance outside Jerusalem, he chose to build a new unofficial capital city honoring the emperor beside the Mediterranean Sea. The location allowed Herod two key freedoms: first, he had an almost blank slate on which to design and build his city, and second, he could build a prominent temple to Augustus and Roma, both of which would have been impossible in Jerusalem. This was Herod’s largest building project, encompassing as it did an entire port city, and he completed the project in approximately twelve years (about 22 to 10 BCE; *Ant.* 15.341).

Caesarea sits on the site of an older Hellenistic city, Straton’s Tower, likely founded under the Ptolemies (Stieglitz 1996). The earlier city was much smaller than Herod’s new city, with two small harbors carved out of the coastland (Raban 1992, 21). Alexander Janneus controlled it for a time before the Romans took it away from him, strategically weakening the Hasmonean kingdom. The city then fell into disrepair, allowing Herod to step in and build an entirely new city and harbor complex on the old one.

The harbor, Sebastos, was an engineering wonder. Rather than expand one of the small land-locked Hellenistic harbors, Herod created a large deep-sea harbor. This harbor—not only Herod’s greatest architectural feat but one of the greatest architectural feats of the Augustan era (Hohlfelder et al. 2007, 409)—took approximately a decade to construct. Concrete moles that extended out into the open sea (Hohlfelder 1999, 156–7) enclosed about 100,000 square meters. The moles required the use of massive amounts of a special concrete that would set underwater (Brandon 2015, 47). This concrete, a Roman invention, used an ash, *pozzolana*, which was mixed with slaked lime, water, and an aggregate. Herod imported *pozzolana* from Italy but used

the local sandstone, *kurkar*, as the aggregate, probably as a cost-saving measure, since he liked to use local building materials as much as possible. Unfortunately, the *kurkar* did not set well in the mixture and his workmen apparently did not always understand the proper proportions of ingredients to make a strong underwater concrete, with the result that the concrete at Caesarea Maritima is much inferior to true Roman underwater concrete (Brandon 2015, 49). Despite this flaw, large underwater chunks of Herod's harbor still survive.

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Herod's workmen used several different techniques in building the moles, requiring wooden frames to hold the concrete while it set underwater. One technique was to build wooden boxes with double walls, which were towed out to sea. Once above the location at which a concrete block was needed, the workmen sank the box by filling the space between the two walls with the *pozzolana* concrete and left it to set before adding the next course of blocks above it (Hohlfelder 1999, 158). Another technique was to build large rectangular wooden barges, which were towed out to sea and filled with the concrete, so they sank down into position (Brandon 2015, 50–1).



Figure 9.9 Josephus says Herod restored the Temple of Pythian Apollo at Rhodes, whose few columns give an impression of its setting on the acropolis, looking northeast to modern Turkey. The

complex, enhanced by beautifully detailed retaining walls, included a temple to Athena and Zeus, a *nymphaeum*, a small *odeon* or *bouleuterion*, a Greek stadium, and an Artemision (compare Caesarea Maritima's stadium, palace, theater group).

Herod's magnificent harbor did not last, thanks in part to the poorly made concrete and in part to the ravages of the sea. Scholars have offered various dates and causes for its destruction. In recent studies Brandon suggests that no one event destroyed the harbor, but that as the last parts were being constructed, the first parts built were likely eroding, worn down by the saltwater, the currents, and marine life (Brandon 2015, 59). Despite this, the harbor was in use well into the fourth century CE. Indeed, even when the moles were no longer visible above the water, their remnants below were still intact enough to offer ships protection from the open sea for several hundred more years. While the harbor had structural issues, it was an engineering wonder that changed the shipping routes in the Mediterranean for centuries.

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Directly off this harbor, at the north end was a quay built by Herod, flanked by a large warehouse to the east of it (Raban 2009, 134–5). This warehouse was rebuilt in the Byzantine era, but upon the earlier Herodian foundation. The warehouse was quite large and in its second incarnation likely stored supplies for the army and government officials, such as wine, olive oil, grain, and the like (Stabler et al. 2008, 6). It is unclear if Herod would have also used it to stockpile supplies for his troops, or if it was used by merchants to hold their goods.

Josephus describes the streets as being on an orthogonal grid, with one street running diagonally (*War* 1.408–15); aerial photographs and excavations show this was the case. The grid of north–south and east–west streets was kept over the life of the city. These streets were unpaved originally, with no colonnades or sidewalks, simply hemmed in by the buildings on either side (Patrich 2011, 18).



Figure 9.10 A stadium ran parallel to the seashore at Caesarea Maritima, between the Temple of Roma and Augustus, Herod's Promontory Palace, and the theater. The stadium's east wall of the east range of seats (shown here) fronted on a plaza, later filled in during the Byzantine era.

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A wall, no longer visible, encircled the city, according to Josephus; excavations have uncovered sections of the foundation of this wall in both the north and the south of the city and the continuation of the wall between these two pieces can be traced by a slightly raised line across the surface of the ground (Patrich 2011, 15). The wall was semi-elliptical in plan, enclosing even the theater in the southern half of the city, mirroring the wall at Sebaste, where Herod similarly enclosed the entire city and all its structures. The wall incorporated towers, some of which appear to have been built before the wall while others were apparently built at the same time as the wall, since they bond into the wall. Roller proposes a polygonal wall with five gates (Roller 1998, 143), but Patrich finds this proposal too systematic to fit the excavated remains (Patrich 2011, 16).

Herod's temple to Roma and Augustus overlooked the harbor on a raised platform that diverged from the orthogonal grid of the city; instead it aligned with the axis of the harbor. In this way, those coming to Caesarea Maritima, and Herod's kingdom, saw this temple, dedicated

to the empire and the emperor, before seeing anything else. The site of the temple was a small natural hill that was enlarged to form a *temenos* with the aid of longitudinal barrel vaults and a set of interlocking walls, the “rooms” of which were filled with sand to create a stable base (Patrich 2011, 20).

Below and west of the platform was a rectangular piazza, approximately 1 m higher than the quay below, bounded on the north and south by wings extending from the platform. A staircase led up to the platform from a large pier that was perpendicular to the quay. In addition, a bridge, separate from the staircase, ran from the quay up to the platform, and another staircase was located on the south side of the platform. Although the platform’s north and south walls were perpendicular to the western wall, the eastern wall curved out, but the reason for this modification is not clear (Patrich 2011, 20).

The altar for the temple, the site of cult sacrifice, was likely located in the piazza below the temple on its west side, where a large rectangular foundation, 21 m by 9.4 m dating to the time of Herod, was excavated between the wings of the platform on the temple’s axis. The excavators interpret this as the foundation of the altar, where sacrifices to the emperor and the empire would have been made (Holum 2004, 190).



Figure 9.11 The well-dressed foundations were the base for Herod's Temple to Roma and Augustus in Caesarea Maritima—of which few remains have been found—which overlooked the harbor and dominated the whole city. The scruffier foundation above them on a 45-degree angle was part of the

The temple itself was completely razed in the Byzantine period, possibly by Christians bent on ridding the city of any “pagan shrines” (Holum 2004, 191), but parts of its foundations have been found. The *naos*, which diverges from the axial regularity of the city, looking roughly northwest to the Mediterranean (and Rome beyond), measured 28.6 by 46.4 m, longer than the contemporary Qasr el Bint Faroun at Petra and wider than the slightly later Temple of Bel at Palmyra (Holum 2004, 187). The temple was built of the local limestone (*kurkar*), resting on bedrock for its foundation, with gray mortar between the bedrock and the first course of the foundation. Only fifty architectural fragments have been recovered, but they indicate a Corinthian-order temple, with a height, including podium and gabled roof, of about 30 m. The columns had attic bases and plain round shafts coated in stucco both to make them white and to allow flutings (Holum 1999, 19). The *naos*—apparently peripteral and hexastyle with a colonnade all around and a porch on the west end toward the sea (Holum 2004, 187)—would have towered over the harbor directly below and in front.

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While it is possible that there were other temples in this city, no archaeological remains of them have been found. Rather, most of the evidence for the presence of other cults in the city comes from city coins, gemstones, and statuary, and from a later period. The most heavily represented cult is Tyche, who may already have been worshipped in Straton’s Tower; the most interesting evidence is an inscription mentioning a Tiberieum donated by Pontius Pilate (Richardson 2000).

Herod also constructed facilities for hosting Roman-style entertainment. One of these was a structure that appears to be the amphitheater at Caesarea, mentioned by Josephus in a rich description of the games that took place when the new city was inaugurated (*Ant.* 16.137–41). The U-shaped structure ran north–south along the coastline just 2.2 m above sea level. Made of *kurkar*, it occupied an area approximately 300 m long and 50 m wide, with a capacity of about 10,000 spectators. There were starting gates on the north for horse races, built of limestone coated with plaster; at the southern end was a rounded gallery (the *sphendone*). The chariots started the race in parallel lines, and raced across the stadium, rounding a turning post at the far southern end of the stadium and returning back to the finish line of the race, which was marked with chalk. These features, seen at Olympia,

suggest that Herod's races at Caesarea Maritima were Greek, rather than Roman, an odd decision in his city dedicated to the Roman Empire and the emperor himself. Annual *venationes*—staged animal fights and hunts that were Roman in nature—were held in the hippodrome, for which a protective net was hung around the arena to shield the audience; the holes for such a net are present in the top of the podium walls and the first rows of seats of the stadium (Patrich 2011, 30–5).

There has been debate over the proper name for this structure. While it is clear that this structure is Josephus's "amphitheater," the place is not actually an amphitheater; it has been proposed that it ought to be called a "circus" (Porath 2003), but most agree that this structure is more properly considered a hippodrome (e.g. Gleason 1998, 37 and Patrich 2011). The structure was shortened around the end of the Second Temple Period, and would then have ceased to function as a hippodrome. The nature of this later stage of usage is not clear, but it might have then been an amphitheater.

The theater at Caesarea Maritima—one of the earliest structures to be fully excavated and frequented by nineteenth-century travelers touring the Holy Land—was part of Herod's original plan for the city; like the hippodrome, it was a key part of its dedication, housing major activities of the festival. This theater's design is noteworthy. In the first place, it is a Roman- rather than a Greek-style theater, suggesting that Herod wanted his city to be as visibly Roman as possible. It followed the new trend in theaters in Rome by being built of stone (the first stone theater was Pompey's theater, about mid-50s BCE); in fact, the lower levels of seats, from the time of Herod, were cut out of bedrock, while the remodeled and later upper levels were made of cut stone. It is not clear what the exact layout of seats and exits was at the time of Herod.

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The theater—seating about 3,500 to 4,000 spectators and measuring about 90 to 100 m (Patrich 2011, 29)—like the hippodrome faces the Mediterranean, although its prop building and *scaenae frons* obstructed the view of the sea. The latter was made of local limestone covered in stucco to improve its appearance. The orchestra had a stucco floor, which had to be replaced on a regular basis: in all, fourteen layers of colored plaster have been found above the original layer of stucco. Only one other example of this style of floor is attested and it is nearly a hundred years later.

Herod needed a palace in Caesarea that would be magnificent enough

to welcome guests; early excavators of other parts of Caesarea realized that an identifiable swimming pool had been surrounded by a domicile of some sort, and named it the “Sea Villa.” Netzer and Levine identified this robbed-out “promontory palace” as Herod’s (Levine and Netzer 1986). Further excavations by Kathryn Gleason and Barbara Burrell revealed that this villa was only half of a complex comprising two separate but abutting palaces. While Gleason and Burrell feel unable to identify the promontory palace *definitively* as Herod’s, lacking inscriptions and clean deposits, they agree that this structure was built by Herod, basing this assertion on a combination of the surviving architecture, the site’s stratigraphy (so far as it survives), and historical texts, such as Josephus’s descriptions of the palace and its placement in the city (*Ant.* 15.331, 341).

The complex is built on one of three natural promontories on the coastline, the other two anchoring Herod’s harbor. At the same time he was constructing the harbor (ca. 22–15 BCE), Herod constructed the Lower Palace, with a layout reminiscent of Herod’s first palace at Jericho, except that the large swimming pool at the center of Caesarea’s palace replaces the courtyard. The pool is carved out of the bedrock and lined with *pozzolana*, the same hydraulic plaster used in the construction of the moles; *pozzolana* was imported to Judea only under Herod, suggesting that he constructed both at the same time (Gleason et al. 1998, 29). This creation of a fresh-water swimming pool in the middle of a palace that juts out into the sea is just the sort of novel design feature that would have appealed to Herod. The pool had colonnades on the north, south, and west, embellished with rock cut planters for flowers and shrubs between the columns.

While most of this Lower Palace was robbed out, enough of the foundations remain to reconstruct the layout. The palace was two-storied, with a staircase in its northeastern corner that gave access to the second floor. The eastern side of the ground level housed a large *triclinium*, with small rooms on either side. The western half of the palace is too robbed out to interpret, but it likely housed living quarters. The level of the craftsmanship for the Lower Palace is exquisite and its situation out “in the sea” is clear Herodian innovation (Gleason et al. 1998, 46).

An Upper Palace was added to the Lower Palace during the later building stages of Caesarea Maritima (ca. 15–10 BCE). While some suggest Herod’s heirs or the Roman procurators built the Upper Palace

(Porath 2003), we accept the view that Herod built the entire complex at two different times (Gleason et al. 1998), perhaps to accommodate the dignitaries coming for the city's inauguration. Since the Upper Palace's layout is incoherent without the Lower Palace (Gleason et al. 1998, 38), it is clearly an addition rather than an independent structure. In contrast to the inward-facing and private Lower Palace, the Upper Palace was specifically designed to be the public section of the palace complex, designed around a large courtyard, approx. 42 by 65 m with porticoes on all four sides. The columns are local limestone, coated in plaster, with Attic bases and Doric capitals; this mixing of styles was quite common by this time. A large underground cistern was built beneath the eastern half of the courtyard, allowing for the collection of rainwater, an important commodity for a palace practically in the sea. The unusual entrance to this palace, and to the courtyard, was via a square monumental gateway on the eastern wall (Gleason et al. 1998, 47). On the external northwest corner of the gateway was a large tower that would have allowed for the supervising of the hippodrome from within a secure location (Patrich 2011, 27).

While it was initially thought that the courtyard of the Upper Palace was covered in crushed *kurkar* sandstone (Gleason et al. 1998, 47), recent archaeobotanical studies have shown that Herod had plantings in this area of the palace complex, although the later use of the site has obscured the remains of the garden portions (Gleason 2014, 89). Recent studies of ancient pollen samples collected in the Upper Palace from secure locations suggest that amongst other plants Herod had conifers of the cypress family, hazelnuts, various types of sage, and roses (Langgut 2015, 119), all “prestige” plants. Cypresses were often grown in Rome's villa gardens as status symbols that could be seen from outside the garden by passersby (Langgut 2015, 117). Hazelnuts were also found in contemporary Roman villa gardens, but hazelnuts are native to Europe and are not able to withstand exposure to saltwater (Langgut 2015, 118). By planting them in his seaside villa, Herod was showing his ability to defy nature in his building projects as well as imitating gardens he may have seen in Rome.

The interior of the Upper Palace is better preserved than the Lower Palace, allowing more certainty as to the use of the different spaces. The northern wing of the Upper Palace consisted of two large suites, divided by a service corridor. The eastern suite was divided into four rooms, all of which faced north toward a courtyard that featured a circular fountain at its center (Patrich 2011, 27). The western suite faced south and had a large basilical audience hall in the middle, flanked by smaller rooms. Its bema or dais was likely located in the northern part of the hall and had a heated floor beneath it. Netzer hypothesizes that the

heated floor was used in the fall and winter months, when it could be quite chilly on the coast, particularly if one was seated holding audiences for long periods of time (Gleason et al. 1998, 47). West of this suite of rooms, a small bathhouse included a *miqueh*, similar to other *miquaoth* from the Herodian Quarter of Jerusalem. As a Roman procurator would have had no use for a *miqueh*, either Herod or Agrippa I must have built the Upper Palace (Gleason et al. 1998, 44). Since the northern wall of the Upper Palace bonds with the western wall of the hippodrome, both must have been constructed at the same time (Gleason et al. 1998, 34, 45). It is much more likely that Herod, not Agrippa, built both the hippodrome and the Upper Palace during the second half of the Caesarea Maritima construction phase.

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Thus, at Caesarea Maritima, Herod built an entire ideal port city, including the harbor with attached storage facilities, a temple to the empire and emperor, a palace complex, and entertainment facilities for the residents and visitors of the place, showing off the full capabilities of his engineers and workmen, along with his own creative genius. Compared with his earlier project at Sebaste, at Caesarea Maritima Herod sought to impress. Yet even as he designed a city that would appear impressive from ships approaching his artificial harbor, he still used local building materials such as plaster-coated limestone rather than imported marble. Still, Herod's city was a magnificent feat and offered an impressive entrance to his kingdom for visitors from elsewhere in the empire. In every respect, Caesarea Maritima was a success.

Interlude: the third Temple to Roma and Augustus

Shortly after Herod began construction of Caesarea Maritima, with its temple to Roma and Augustus, Augustus expanded Herod's territory to the north, to include Auranitis, Batanaea, and Gaulanitis. To celebrate this, Josephus tells us, Herod built a third temple to Roma and Augustus near Panias (*Ant.* 15.363; *War* 1.404), to go with his temples at Sebaste and Caesarea Maritima. Like these other two sites, the region was predominately non-Jewish and Panias had for many years been a cult site to the god Pan, making the addition of a temple dedicated to Roma and the Emperor inoffensive.

The precise location of the temple Herod built is debated. Three main options have been proposed, but so far none has been proven

definitively. Part of the problem is the lack of complete excavations and published reports. The first location proposed was in front of the cave that was sacred to Pan (Ma'oz 1996). There is insufficient space for a temple at this site, and Herod would hardly have placed a temple to Rome and Augustus directly in the way of a major cult site, a site that remained active for years after Herod; we are partial to Wilson's suggestion that this was an open courtyard in association with the cave and the cult of Pan (Wilson 2004, 15). A second proposal locates the structure about 100 m west of the cave, and about 10 m higher, Netzer's suggestion for the temple site; these remains include a wall in *opus reticulatum* (Netzer 2008a, 219). While the location of this second site is a better choice for a temple than in front of the cave, the lack of any clear remains of a temple raises doubts about this site as the Augusteum. It is more likely another sort of monumental building: perhaps a triclinium (Berlin 2013, 8*) or a palace (Lichtenberger 1999, 152).

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A third proposal locates Herod's temple at Horvat Omrit; this has in its favor the fact that the structure is a temple, though it is some distance from Panias (see [Figure 9.8](#)). The building has three phases: the earliest was a small shrine, which was replaced by a pseudoperipteral temple, which was then remodeled and expanded into a peristyle temple (Nelson 2015). The excavators propose that the pseudoperipteral temple was Herod's Augusteum (Overman, Olive, & Nelson 2003, also 2007; Overman 2011). The full reports for the site have yet to be published, so the dating of the phases is unclear; one of the excavators argues that the pseudoperipteral temple may have been built by Herod Philip (Nelson 2015, 81). It is best to conclude that Herod's temple to Augustus in the north has yet to be definitively located.

Jericho: the third and final palace

During this period of fruitful architectural experimentation, Herod built a third and final palace at Jericho, his favored spot for the winter months. The careful engineering and planning of his third palace, in contrast to the first two, was the most impressive of the three, showcasing architectural and landscaping innovations. The design of the palace has been described as a display of mastery of the natural elements (Gleason 2014, 84), akin to his building a palace in the sea or cascading down the side of a desert cliff face. The complex sits on both banks of the Wadi Qelt, with a bridge that no longer exists linking the two sides (Netzer 2008b, 58). This “channeling” of the wadi through the middle

of the palace created the appearance of mastery over the precious resource of water in the Jericho plain (Gleason 2014, 84; see [Figure 9.1](#)).

On the north bank sits one large wing of the palace and on the south bank are three other “wings”: a formal sunken garden, a pool, and a square building with domed roof on an artificial tell, likely a reception hall. Josephus says that two of these wings were named after Augustus and Agrippa (*War* 1.407). In the east is the large pool, likely for both swimming and water sports. In the west is the formal sunken garden, which features a retaining wall with niches, which in turn frames a semicircular tiered structure in its middle. A water channel runs along the base of both the wall and the semicircular structure, apparently intended as a “reflecting pool” (Netzer 2008b, 66). The semicircular structure provided benches for potted plants, allowing for the easy rearrangement of the garden’s centerpiece. The niches in the wall have been variously interpreted as either for urns, plants, or statues (Gleason 2014, 85). Because of incomplete excavations, it is not clear what the main part of the garden consisted of in terms of arrangement or choice of plants (see [Figure 9.5](#)).

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The facilities on the southern bank were linked to the northern bank by a bridge that crossed the wadi, on the axis of the artificial hill and between the pool and the garden; a set of formal steps gave access to the building on the top of the tell, smaller than but in form not unlike the stairs that would provide formal access to Herodium. Both sides of the wadi must have been designed as a single large complex that would show off the best of both the architectural and the landscaping features of the project, and from the top of the artificial tell, one could obtain an excellent view toward the Dead Sea.

The main wing of the palace is the northern one, a large, nearly rectangular structure featuring a colonnade along most of the elevation facing the wadi and the western side. The interior consists of a series of halls and reception rooms, with two courtyards, one in the east and one in the west, and a Roman-style bathhouse (Netzer 2008b, 59). Nearly all of the walls of this wing are done in frescos made to look like marble slabs and several also feature stucco work (Netzer 2008b, 59). While the eastern courtyard has colonnades on all four sides and the western one on three sides, the western courtyard was the main one, with rows of pits and planting pots, suggesting a formal planting of “status” plants. What these plants were is not yet known, though it has been suggested the pots might have held balsam and the pits were for palms (Gleason

2014, 84). This would have allowed for the showcasing of the natural products that gave Jericho its wealth in a “demonstration garden” of sorts for visitors to the palace.

The palace’s *triclinium* ran along the western end of this garden, but could only be accessed via the colonnade that ran along the southern side of the building. This entrance is quite wide, making it both door and window for diners, clearly tying the room to the view of the Jericho plain that it granted (Netzer 2008b, 63). At 28.9 m by 18.9 m in dimension, this *triclinium* is the largest yet found in Israel from the pre-Roman or Roman periods. In addition to the impressive size and view that the space commanded, the floor of the room was nearly entirely paved in the *opus sectile* style of cut colored stone slabs arranged in patterns. This technique is Roman and the high quality of its execution suggests a Roman crew made it (Netzer 2008b, 64). The impressive nature of the design and decoration of the *triclinium* alone shows Herod’s desire to dazzle with this palace.

In the third palace at Jericho, as with the Northern Palace at Masada, or the Promontory Palace at Caesarea Maritima, we see Herod embracing the landscape in his buildings and using architectural design to suggest dominance of the natural elements. At Jericho, a place where he had held property and various palaces for quite some time, this was particularly important. Herod was full master of all of Jericho at this point and he made this point clear with this expansive and expensive palace with its views of the Jericho plain, gardens showcasing the natural products that gave the region its wealth, and its spanning of the unpredictable wadi, suggesting control of even the water source for the area. Herod made a very clear statement with his third and final palace at Jericho.

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The Temple and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem

At about the same time as the beginning of construction at Herodium, Caesarea, and Jericho, Herod began an extensive “renovation” of the Second Temple, so extensive that one scholar has suggested that it should be known as the “Third Temple” (Jacobson 2007, 149). This was Herod’s most fruitful period, during which he undertook massive engineering feats.

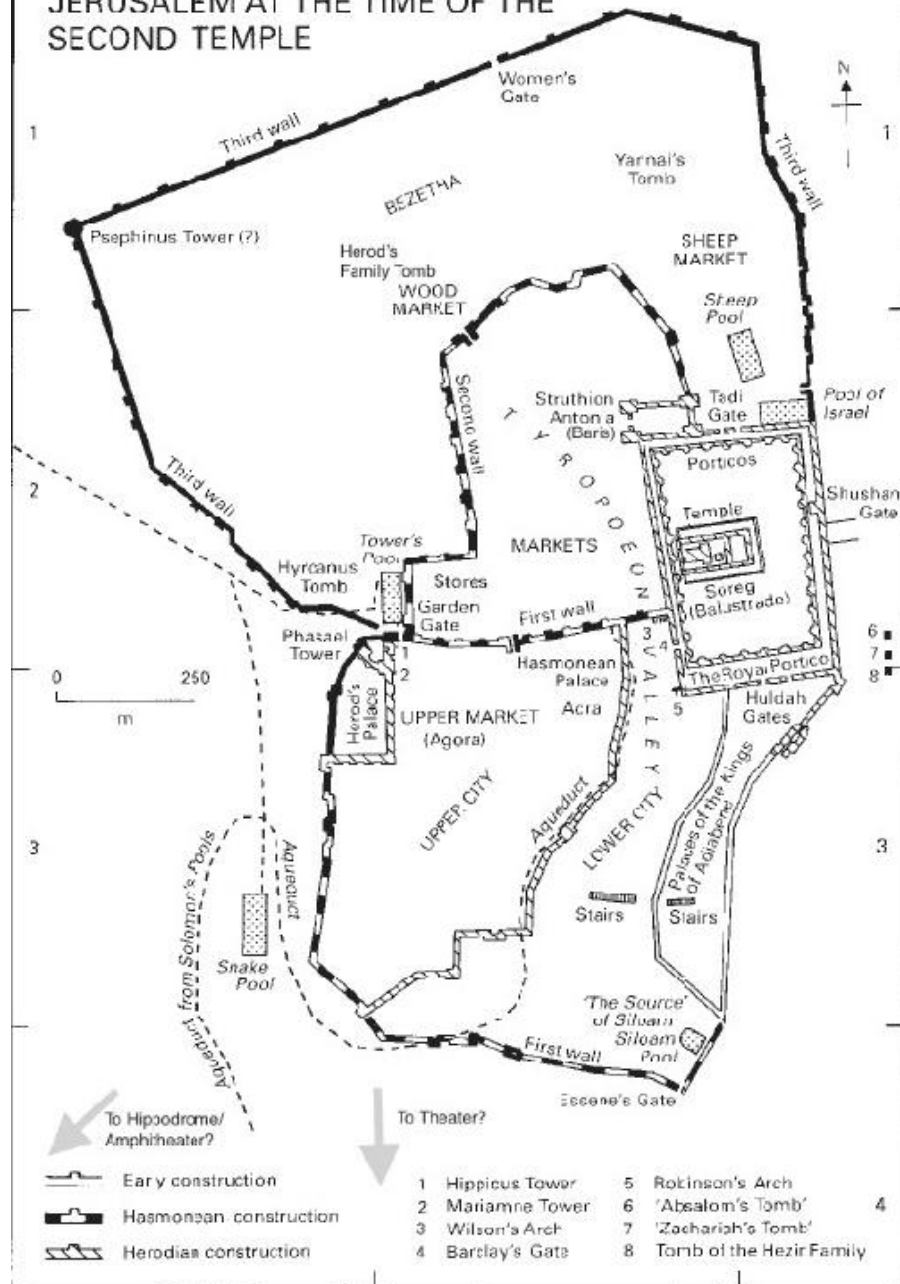
In the remodeling of the Second Temple there were certain things Herod could not change, but he still transformed it into one of the

wonders of the ancient world, though it stood less than a century after his death. Its destruction in 70 CE was almost complete, except for some of the substructures; its replacement by the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aksa mosque make excavations impossible. While work has been done around the base of the Temple Mount, little remains to be found of the Second Temple. Most of what we can say about Herod's structure comes from Josephus's account, corroborated by passages from later Rabbinic writings, in particular the Mishnah. While Josephus, scion of a priestly family, gives what can be thought of as an "eye-witness" account, the Mishnah, at least in its final form, is not.

The sources agree as to the size of the temple itself, 100 cubits by 100 cubits by 100 cubits (about 150 m cubed), a perfect cube of symbolic dimensions. Inside, the space was divided between the Holy of Holies, the sanctuary, the vestibule, and a series of small cells. The sanctuary and the Holy of Holies were separated not by a wall, but by two woven curtains. While the Holy of Holies was empty (lacking the ark of the covenant), the sanctuary held the Menorah, the incense altar, and the shewbread table, which was of gold. The sanctuary was separated from the vestibule by a wall with folding doors. The vestibule was covered in gold decoration; Josephus writes that the walls were covered in gold and that from the ceiling hung a giant gold grapevine with gold leaves and clusters of grapes the size of grown men (*War* 5.208–9). The building itself is described in the Mishnah as being like a lion in shape (*m.Middot* 4:7), which suggests that the vestibule was wider than the chambers behind it. This is corroborated by the description Josephus offers, saying that the façade of the building was of equal height and width, but that the building behind was much narrower (*War* 5.207). The exterior of the building was covered, in part, with polished gold plates, and the rest was of a bright white color (*War* 5.222–3); though Josephus does not make clear where the gold plates were located and what made the rest of the building white (plaster, polished stone, some other means?). In any event, it would have been visible from a distance, gleaming and flashing in the sunlight.

A series of enclosed courtyards were in front of the temple: the court of the priests, the court of Israel (reserved for men), and the court of women. Within these courts were other smaller enclosures for various people and purposes: lepers and Nazirites, the baking of special bread, and the slaughter of the animals for sacrifice.

JERUSALEM AT THE TIME OF THE SECOND TEMPLE



Map 9.1 Map of Jerusalem, with Herod's building activities. Three major sites were the extension and rebuilding of the temple (Haram ash-Sherif/Dome of the Rock), to its north the Antonia fortress (on the site of the earlier Baris), and the palace (today's citadel/police station). The palace had wings dedicated to

Augustus and Agrippa, with towers dedicated to Mariamme (Herod's wife), Phasael (his brother), and Hippicus (a friend).

Beyond all of these was the outer court, the court of gentiles, the largest of the courts that took up the remaining space in the temple precinct, which altogether covered some 14 hectares (Netzer 2008a, 160). Colonnades surrounded the outer court on the north, east, and west, while on the southern side stood the *stoa basileia*. Herod had the most freedom to work in this outer court with its colonnades and it is in them that one finds the most impressive engineering feats. While nothing remains of the colonnades, Josephus described them as consisting of tall columns of marble and having ceilings of cedar (*Ant.* 5.190–2). The columns, like columns found at Herodian sites elsewhere, were likely of limestone plastered over to look like white marble. The new colonnades were perfect for welcoming the growing number of pilgrims from the diaspora, coming to offer sacrifice in Jerusalem. Within the colonnades they could rest in the shade, change money for the temple tax, and conduct other business.

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Josephus describes the *stoa basileia* or royal portico in hyperbolic terms: “a structure more noteworthy than any under the sun” (*Ant.* 15.411–16 for the full description). As Netzer points out, however, Herod was neither royal by birth nor of priestly lineage, and could not approach the inner parts of the temple, so he needed another place distinctively his (Netzer 2008a, 170), somewhere within the temple complex. By creating such a large and impressive structure to hold court and entertain guests, Herod achieved his goal (see [Figure 9.4](#)).

Herod's temple project was a major feat, designed to curry favor with the religious elite of Jerusalem and to give the pilgrims of the diaspora a place worthy of a journey. While limited by tradition in his renovations to the temple itself, Herod used expensive materials and hired master craftsmen to create the most stunning place he could within these parameters. He was able to unleash his creativity in the size, scope, and functioning of the courtyards and porticoes surrounding the temple, in particular his own royal portico. We discuss the social significance of the innovations of Herod's courts in [Chapter 11](#). The temple in Jerusalem, once renovated, was a sight worth traveling to, and by all accounts, many did.

Josephus tells us that Herod chose to be interred at Herodium; the fact that it looks a little like an oversized *tholos* lends credence to this claim. The archaeological record suggests Herod remodeled the exterior of Upper Herodium toward the end of his reign, necessitating the destruction of the theater (see above), the original glacis wall, and the paths up into the fortress. In their places, Herod built an artificial mound around the structure, covering the lower three floors, making it look like a fortress embedded inside a conical mountain. The total height of this cone came to 32 m with a gradient of 32 degrees, making it a stable slope. The windows of floors two and three had to be blocked up once construction of the artificial mound began.

A new entrance was built into this artificial mound, consisting of a large monumental stairway that went straight up the northeast side of the mount, with an entrance room inside the outer casing at the top of the stairs. The staircase itself was designed to be showy, as Josephus suggests in his description of Herodium: “It has a steep ascent formed of two hundred steps of hewn stone, of the purest white marble” (*War* 1.419–21). The 6.5-m-wide steps were stripped from the site long ago, so we do not know if they were really made of marble or just limestone. There is no surviving evidence for Netzer’s suggestions of walls and roof on the stairway (Netzer 2008a, 187).

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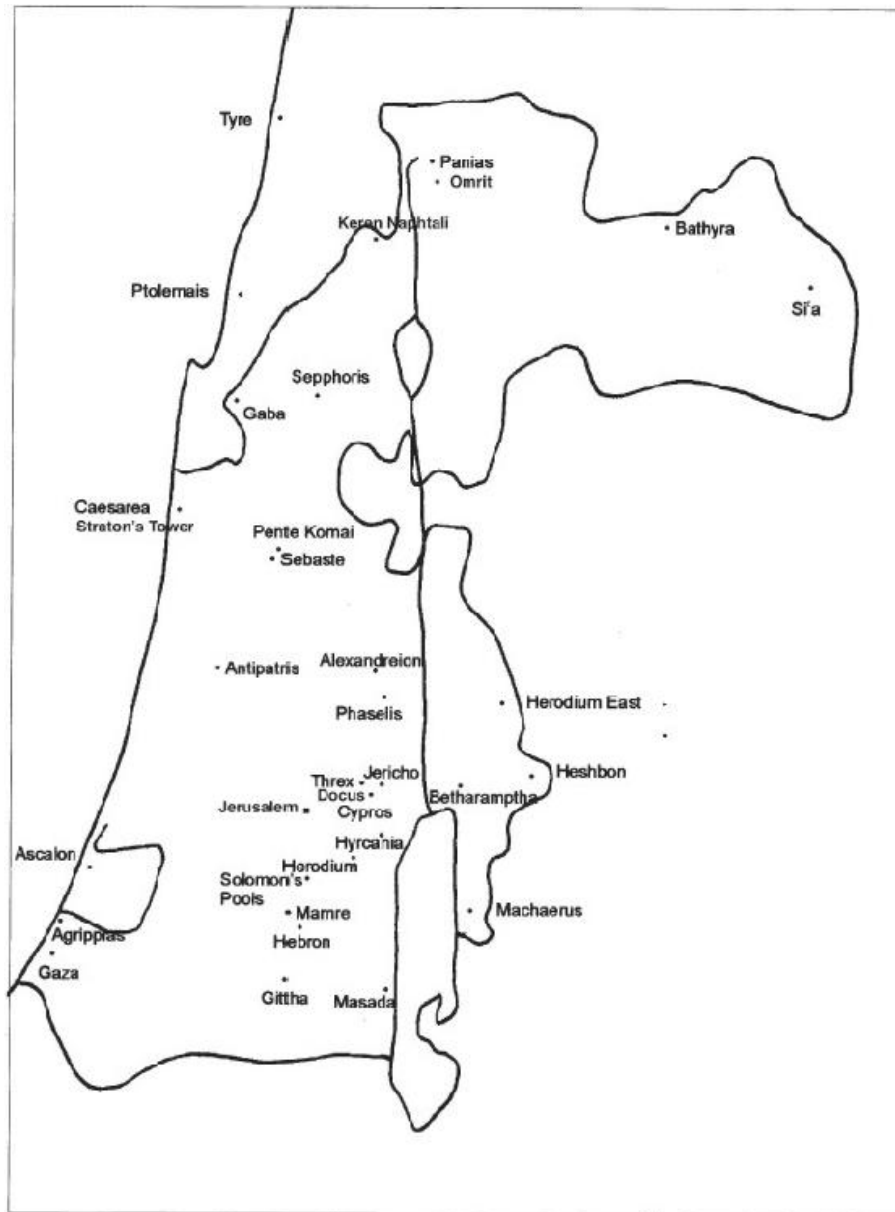
The fact that Jewish law prohibits the interring of the dead within the space of the living created problems for scholars looking for Herod’s tomb. Once Edward Robinson positively established the site in 1836 as Herodium, it took over 170 years for a mausoleum to be found. In 2007 Netzer announced at a press conference that he had located Herod’s tomb on the northeastern slope of Upper Herodium, to one side of the monumental stairway; he published his conclusion months after its discovery and prior to complete excavations (Netzer 2008a, ix–xiv, 2008b, 8–18). Only its foundation was intact. The mausoleum was built of a hard white limestone that did not require a plaster layer to turn it a gleaming white. The excavators hypothesized that Jewish rebels who used Herodium during the first revolt destroyed the mausoleum and the sarcophagi within it (Netzer et al. 2013, 248).

They reconstructed the structure based on architectural fragments found in the area and knowledge of contemporary mausoleums, positing a three-story structure with the first two stories rectangular; the circular

top story was encased in a colonnade of eighteen columns and the whole structure was crowned by a concave cone decorated with carvings made to look like funerary urns around its rim and on its peak. The top story would have housed the sarcophagus of the king. The monument would have stood approximately 25 m tall, with a base 10 m by 10 m (Netzer et al. 2013, 248). Lacking any sign of a stair to reach the entrance, the excavators posit that on the day of the burial, a wooden temporary structure of some sort would have been set up to allow access to the tomb.

This style of tomb was common for the elite throughout the Roman Empire in the first centuries BCE and CE. Comparanda for the tomb are found in France, Italy, North Africa, and at Petra. The closest comparison is the so-called Tomb of Absalom in the Kidron valley in Jerusalem, dating to the first century CE: its square base is surmounted by a round drum, covered by a concave roof, topped by a carved lotus flower; the whole stands 19.7 m in height (Peleg-Barkat 2013, 263; see [Figure 1.2](#)).

Pieces of three different sarcophagi were found in the rubble, all of limestone, though slightly different colors, and all with gabled roofs. The simplest is a gray sarcophagus, with circles blocked out on the short sides of the roof and rectangles blocked out on the long sides. It is likely this sarcophagus was to have rosettes on the short sides and some sort of carving on the long sides of the roof, but it was pressed into service prior to its completion (Foerster 2013, 268). The second sarcophagus is of white limestone or hard chalk and features vegetative decorations, rosettes on the short sides, and bands of olive or laurel leaves on the long sides of the roof. A delicate garland of ivy leaves encircles the entire body of the sarcophagus (Foerster 2013, 270). The third sarcophagus is of red limestone from the Jerusalem area, polished to a high shine, but simply decorated, with rosettes on the short sides of the body of the sarcophagus, and a palmette on the short side of the lid (Foerster 2013, 275–6). This understated sarcophagus, unlike the first, was likely complete at the time of its use. All three were broken; the red was smashed into tiny bits and less than 50 percent of it was recovered, while the other two sarcophagi were broken in much larger pieces. The excavators suggested the gray and white sarcophagi had been pushed out of the mausoleum and broke as a result of the fall, whereas the red sarcophagus had been deliberately smashed (Netzer et al. 2013, 253).



Map 9.2 Map of Herod's kingdom, with his building activities. Most Herodian sites were in the eastern sector of Judea, with a paucity of projects in Galilee, Perea, and the northeast. The likeliest explanation for this distribution is Herod's concern with Nabatean attack or influence, and relative unconcern with south Syrian or Decapolis factors.

Netzer and his team attributed the red sarcophagus to Herod the Great, suggesting Jewish rebels had deliberately smashed the king's sarcophagus in the Revolt of 66–74 CE. They think one of the others held the remains of Mathace, Herod's fifth wife and the mother of Archelaus, who succeeded Herod as ruler of Judea; the other one might have been made for Archelaus's second wife, Glaphyra, who did not live long into her husband's reign (Netzer et al. 2013, 253–5; but see Foerster's caveat, 2013, 276). It would be understandable that Archelaus might have wanted his mother and wife interred with his father for political and dynastic purposes, instead of using the family tomb outside Jerusalem.

Since the publication of the mausoleum, there has been scholarly resistance to (as well as scholarly support for) the claim that the mausoleum was Herod's. Indeed, one cannot prove definitively that it is Herod's. It is, however, the only mausoleum yet found at the site: the sarcophagi date to the right period of time, the design is not inappropriate, and if it is not Herod's, no suitable alternative identification has been proposed. Until another candidate is found for Herod's mausoleum at Herodium, this one will stand as his.

The location of the mausoleum, to one side and on the slope of the large artificial hill, is not what one might expect for Herod's final resting place, particularly given that the rest of Upper and Lower Herodium is built on a unified set of axes. It may be that as Herodium was visible from Jerusalem, Herod wanted to make the mausoleum eye-catching in some way as well. Indeed, the position of the mausoleum, while not on the site's grid plan, is well located for visibility from the ancient road, which could explain why the theater was destroyed: Herod wanted no competition for attention to his mausoleum by travelers on the road. Though Herodium was visible from a great distance, only when closer to the site would the mausoleum suddenly appear.

Other building projects

Herod may have been king of Jews, but he financed and commissioned building projects in the eastern Mediterranean. Josephus writes of these projects, "But it would be difficult to mention all his other benefactions, such as those that he conferred on the cities in Syria and throughout Greece and on whatever places he may have happened to visit" (*Ant.* 16.146). Some have been mentioned in earlier chapters, such as one of his first building projects ever, in Rhodes (see [Chapter 3](#); [Figure 9.9](#)). Herod also commissioned or helped to fund various sites within his kingdom, which were not directly related to him in the way the sites

surveyed in this chapter were. In the case of Herodian sites in the eastern Mediterranean, we are mainly dependent on Josephus's records of them, for to a large extent they have not been investigated archaeologically. Josephus's interests lay within the bounds of Herod's kingdom, so his descriptions of these more remote sites are quite short. As will be discussed in [Chapter 10](#), in addition to Josephus's records, we have some inscriptions from outside Herod's kingdom, which make reference to him. Here we briefly review the evidence for some of these other building projects.

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Within his own territory Herod did not expend great effort beyond the center of his realm: Judea, Samaria, and the coast. Given that he made a name for himself in the Galilee, one would have thought that he would have built there, particularly in Sepphoris, the regional administrative center, but we lack evidence, literary or archaeological. Further north, in the territories that he gained in 20 BCE, we have already seen that he built an Augusteum near Panias, but beyond that he built little if anything. One site mentioned by Josephus in Batanea, southeast of Panias, was Bathyra, but it is impossible to know if he built anything himself or merely gave land and money (and tax cuts) to encourage relocated Babylonian Jews in the building of the city (*Ant.* 17.23–6).

Herod commissioned commemorative sites for family and friends. In the case of family, he founded a city to remember his father Antipater, and one for his brother Phasaël. The city of Antipatris was, like Caesarea Maritima, built on an older city, in this case Aphek/Pegae (Kochavi 1989), located on the Sharon plain between Caesarea Maritima and Jerusalem, the two main cities of Herod's kingdom, near a spring and filled with trees and greenery. The city was thus on a major trade route and also had great agricultural potential. The site for Herod's brother, named Phaselis (Kh. Fasayil), was in the Jordan Valley north of Jericho (*Ant.* 16.145). No excavations have been carried out at the site, but there are extensive surface remains of a town and an aqueduct bringing a water supply. He founded Agrippias, named after Augustus's right-hand man Marcus Agrippa, by rebuilding Anthedon, located on the Gaza plain. Josephus described it as a "maritime city" (*War* 1.146), so it must have been a lesser port city on the Mediterranean. Few remains of it have been found.

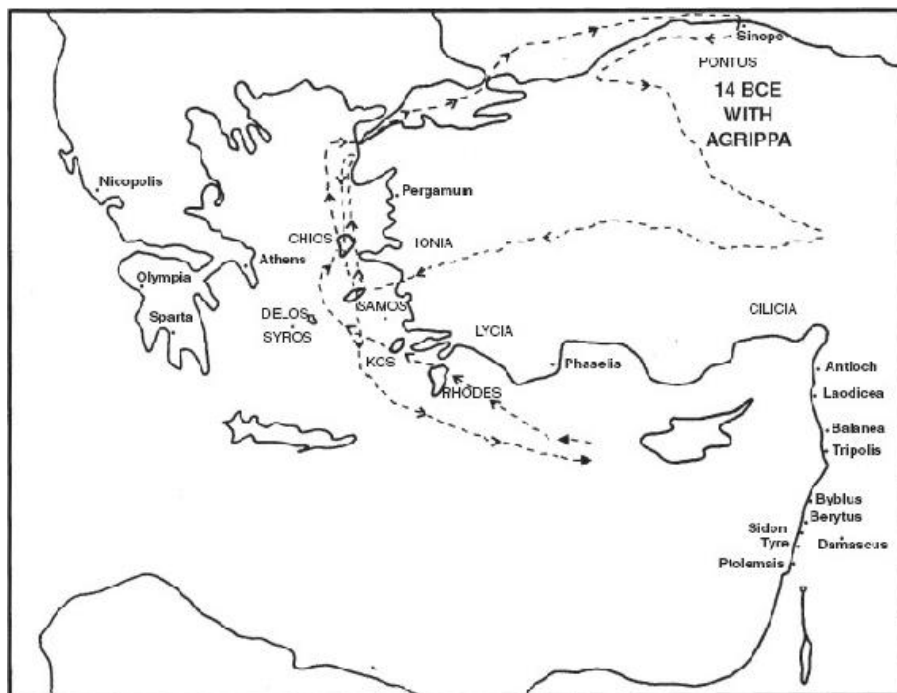
Outside his kingdom, Josephus tells us that Herod built in many cities along the coast of the eastern Mediterranean, in what are now Lebanon

and Syria (*War* 1.422–5). These projects included cultural buildings, such as temples, and functional building projects, such as water systems and city walls. In Antioch he paved the main street and built colonnades on either side (Will 1997, 99–113); in Berytus he built a temple, a market, and porticoes; in Byblos he paid for the city walls to be restored; in Damascus he built a theater and a gymnasium; in Laodicea he commissioned an aqueduct; in Sidon he built a theater; in Tripolis he built a gymnasium; and in Tyre he constructed a temple, a market, porticoes, and halls.

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In the Aegean, Herod gave money to restore the Pythian temple to Apollo on the island of Rhodes, after it was destroyed by an earthquake (see [Figure 9.9](#)). While stuck on the island of Chios, en route to aid Marcus Agrippa, Herod rebuilt a stoa, destroyed in an earlier war (*Ant.* 16.18–20). Lastly, Josephus claims that Herod built most of the buildings in the new city of Nicopolis, founded by Augustus near Actium (*Ant.* 16.147). While excavations there have not revealed clear evidence of Herod's presence, it would be appropriate for Herod to combine his passion for building with his need to manifest his support for the new victorious regime. He used buildings to make clear his own status as king, so why not do the same for his patron?

One of the oddities of Herod's oeuvre outside his own territory is that the inscriptional evidence is better than the archaeological evidence of identifiable building remains, whereas the opposite is true within his realm ([Chapter 10](#)). It is debatable how many inscriptions refer to building projects and how much involvement Herod might have had. But we may note here some of the likeliest additional building projects hinted at in the inscriptions: Delos (gymnasium?), Elis/Olympia (restorations?), Athens (structure[s] on Acropolis?), and Kos (gymnasium?), leaving to one side references to such matters as tax relief, liberality, gifts, and offerings in Josephus's listings of Herod's works. It is unlikely his role can ever be made precise in most cases, and it is of course possible that other projects will emerge as archaeology continues to explore new sites. We can claim Josephus's account of Herod's building activities is a minimal list; his activity was broader than Josephus's information.



Map 9.3 Map of the Mediterranean, with Herod's building activities. A wider view of the eastern Mediterranean underscores Herod's areas of interest where he wished his influence to be felt: cities adjacent to Syria, but not its eastern regions; the coastline of Asia Minor; the Greek islands and mainland—all innovative late-Hellenistic areas.



Figure 9.12 The bath in the Upper Palace at Herodium had a small *tepidarium* with a domed ceiling vault, perhaps one of the earliest such vaults in the Levant. In addition to this bath, there was a larger and more generous bath in the Lower Palace, near the pool and garden complex.

Previously we have argued that the archaeological evidence of Herod's buildings calls for a revision of the usual understanding of Herod's religious views. We based this on the evidence (1), positively, that his palaces consistently included *miqva'oth*, implying adherence to Jewish custom with respect to ritual purity; and (2), negatively, that his buildings showed only very minimal use of iconic imagery, implying adherence to Jewish law with respect to the second commandment. We see no reason to alter the first observation; in fact, there is increased evidence of its correctness. The second observation, however, needs amendment in the wake of recent excavations, especially of the stucco paintings in the reception room at Herodium, as well as the labrum with figural carvings from the bathhouse there.

In addition to the reception room, Herod may have included a statue in the center of the pool in the Promontory Palace at Caesarea Maritima; there were statues of him in more than one location (certainly at Si'a and probably at Athens and possibly elsewhere?); he built three Sebasteia, each of which would have had at a minimum statues of Roma and Augustus; he participated in temples, according to Josephus, in Tyre and Berytus, which would have called for iconic representations; and some of his other structures in the Hellenistic world may have had animal or human likenesses. So we need to make the second observation in a more limited way: in regions in his own territories populated extensively by Jews, Herod observed the provisions of the second commandment. And there is even an exception to this way of putting it in Herodium's reception room—though it apparently had a very short life. But outside his kingdom he felt little obligation to adhere to the commandment.

Conclusion

Archaeology will continue to investigate and disclose Herod's architecture, and will, no doubt, bring more surprises in the future. Others will continue, we hope, in the footsteps of the late lamented Ehud Netzer, combining architectural sophistication with first-hand archaeological work. The number of works focusing on this aspect of Herod's life is increasing: Roller 1998, Lichtenberger 1999, Netzer 2008a, Roddaz 2014.

Several comments need to be made emphatically. (1) The innovative designs of Herod's projects imply an unusually creative mind behind

them, and neither the name nor even the suggestion of a person can be found in the sources available to us, leaving us with the possibility—endorsed also by Netzer—that the creative mind was Herod's. (2) There is enough evidence of technological *savoir faire* to suggest that one or more key persons, possibly including Herod as one of them, were up-to-date on general building techniques and specifically on Roman developments: *opus reticulatum*, the use of *pozzolana*, stucco work, water-related projects, vaulted substructures, retaining walls that have stood the test of time. (3) Some of his projects, especially in the middle period, show real flair in their grand conception: Caesarea Maritima's harbor with the temple hovering over it; the Jerusalem temple with its juxtaposition of Roman and indigenous elements; the desert palaces' juxtaposition of luxury and almost unbuildable locations, as at Masada, Jericho, Macherus, and Hyrcania. (4) His colonnaded *Cardo Maximus* in Antioch was reputed to be the first of its kind, starting a new trend in urban design that spread to the west and ultimately back to the east. (5) Architectural elements in his projects demonstrate a wide variety of influences, and these influences mirror Herod's own background and the influences on him: early-Roman approaches to core features of design; late-Hellenistic notions of grandeur and awe; adoption of Persian understandings of water features and landscaping; localized indigenous concerns, such as the inclusion of *mikva'oth* and the limited use of images in his artistic repertoire; borrowing of artistic canons of taste from Rome, from Egypt, and from Greece.

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10 Herod's finances

Inscriptions, coins, and economy

Adam Marshak emphasizes the importance of “political self-presentation and its role in authority creation and maintenance” (Marshak 2015, 340). He goes on to say that we can move beyond the rhetoric of the primary sources—that is, the primary *literary* sources—and overly simplistic understandings of power dynamics if we focus on rulers’ depictions of themselves in the public sphere. In this way, he argues correctly, we can achieve a more complete view of the then contemporary political machinery. Marshak draws attention to what, in a more general way, we might think of as ways in which “text and artifact” (Wilson & Desjardins 2000) need to be viewed as complementary vehicles in understanding antiquity. We turn to this “political machinery” and its role both in Herod’s presentation of himself publicly and in public portrayals of Herod within the public sphere. To do this, we explore the engraved evidence of Herod as it survives in the archaeological record, first surviving inscriptions of Herod, some contemporaries, and successors, then Herod’s coins along with the images and inscriptions on these coins. Through inscriptions and coinage, we can glimpse both how an ancient ruler was perceived and wished to be perceived, though it is immediately apparent that, compared with Roman contemporaries such as Augustus and Mark Antony (Zanker 1988, 33–77), Herod’s evidence is very meager. Herod’s surviving inscriptions and coins show considerable restraint; they suggest both that he resisted aggrandizing himself and he discouraged others from excessive praise. We then supplement those approaches by an examination that has more to do with his actions, specifically his

actions directed at improving or manipulating the economy. Through this three-pronged approach we aim to shed light on another side of Herod's personality and activities.

Inscriptions

Despite the very large number of opportunities to lionize Herod's generosity in his projects, which in the Roman world would usually have attracted impressive inscriptional records, surprisingly few inscriptions acknowledge Herod's role (Haensch 2014). Few of the surviving inscriptions were associated with structures for which he was responsible; some were found on statue bases that may—like those from Athens and Si'a—have been situated in or near a building to which he contributed. Again, almost none—the one at Si'a is an exception—were found within Herod's own territory; where inscriptions have been identified as referring to Herod, they mainly derive from the Hellenistic world where Herod was active, though not more active than he was on his own turf.

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Reasons for this do not come readily to mind. Is it an accident of archaeology? Or unexpected diffidence? Or a reserve founded on Jewish practices in the homeland? Why would Herod not follow more enthusiastically conventions of the Roman world, especially in areas where Roman patronage was so pervasive? The fact is that we do not know. We can say, however, that in the following catalogue of Herodian inscriptions none appears obviously to derive from Herod himself: vineyard owners, civic leaders, admirers, clients, and other such sources mention Herod, but no inscription implying Herod told someone, "write the following inscription about such and such gift I have just made." Even if the large inscription from Syros/Delos (below, # 5) were to be an exception, as is possible, this is unusual reticence in the Roman world. Whether it indicates an important character trait of Herod is debatable (for locations, see Maps 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3).

1. Masada (Cotton & Geiger 1989, 804–16)

C. Sentius Saturninus, Consul

Philonian wine from the estate of L. Laenius

for King Herod the Jew.

Thirteen Latin inscriptions on wine jugs' handles, all in more or less the above form and from a shipment of 19 BCE, were found at Masada (Cotton & Geiger 1989, ## 804–16). The date, established by the consulship of Saturninus, may refer to the vintage but probably refers to the date of shipment. The type of wine and its location are not otherwise known, but the estate was probably in southern Italy. The handles were found in several locations at Masada: three in storerooms, one in building IX, three in the northwest section of the wall near the synagogue, and one in the floor of the Herodian-level of the synagogue building. Different inscriptions are found on # 817 (also referring to 19 BCE) and # 818 (referring to 14 BCE).

With varying degrees of completeness, the inscriptions refer to “King Herod the Jew” (*regi herodi iudaico*), as the editor insists. The least we can say is that an Italian supplier of wine identified Herod as a Jew, which may be indirect evidence that Herod viewed himself this way. The inscriptions should not be interpreted as recognizing Herod as “King of Jews,” as if this were a formal style of address. In addition to these, six other jars were stamped with consuls’ or others’ names, one dated to 27 BCE (# 795), “Year of Caesar’s seventh and Agrippa’s third consulate,” and one to 26 BCE (# 796), possibly indicating Masada’s well-advanced construction at that time.

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There is also evidence for products other than wine (Berdowski 2006): “honey” (# 800), medicinal frankincense (# 801), “honey wine” (# 821), “apples from Cumae” (# 822, perhaps also ## 823–5), “fish sauce” (*garum*; # 826, referring in lines 4–5 to the “king” and probably to “Herod the Jew” as in the previous cases (somewhat similarly up to # 850)). Berdowski—who emphasizes that the jar’s dating is distinct from the inscription’s dating—leans to the view that the wine and *garum* were shipped at about the same time (19 BCE). Among possible interpretations, he prefers the view that this was high-quality Spanish *garum* meant for the king, not something produced by the king (Berdowski 2006, 246), and likely kosher. There were also Latin amphora stamps referring to “Nepos” and inscriptions on the handles dating to 27–26 BCE (## 946–7, see also ## 948–50).

The jars give evidence of a wide range of imported products on Masada at a relatively early period, and make indisputable reference to Herod the King as a Jew, bearing directly on the public’s perception of him—the public, that is to say, in Judea, where the jugs were found, and in Italy (and perhaps also Spain), where the products were made—and

indirectly on his self-identification in the same way.

2. *Jerusalem (IEJ 20 (1970): 97–8)*

Year 32 of King Herod, Benefactor, Friend of Caesar

inspector of markets

Three minas.

A three-line Greek inscription on a limestone weight, of uncertain provenance, has the first line running around the weight, and the other two lines within (Meshorer 1970). Year 32 corresponds either to 9/8 BCE or, less likely, to 6/5 BCE. A monogram using the first two letters of his name signifies the name Herod. This is the only known Judean inscription referring to Herod as “benefactor” (*eu[ergetēs]*) and “friend of Caesar” (*philok[aisaros]*), terminology found on Diaspora inscriptions to the same effect (contra Meshorer; see below). Whether the wording that linked Herod’s kingship, benefactions, and relationship to Augustus had royal approval cannot be said, but it is likely that Herod would have appointed the *agoranomos* (“market supervisor”).

3. *Ashdod (Kushnir-Stein 1995)*

In the time of King Herod

pious

and friend of Caesar

A persuasive reading of a lead weight from Ashdod argues for a provenance under our King Herod (Kushnir-Stein 1995). When the proper name is not further specified, as in this case, there are other possible interpretations of “Herod”: Agrippa I or Agrippa II or Herod of Chalcis might be possible, all rejected by Kushnir-Stein. The association with Herod of Judea can be strengthened by noting the anchor on the reverse, a symbol appropriate to him and just barely possible for Agrippa II. The language is similar to 2 above, which might on the strength of this inscription be read as “pious” (*eusebias*) rather than “benefactor” (*euvergetou*). The two weights and their descriptions of Herod fit well together.

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4. *Jerusalem; paving (SEG 33 (1983) 1277)*

[In the reign of Herod the King]

in the 20th year of the high priest

[Simon, S]paris Akeonos

[a foreign resident] in Rhodes

[donated the] pavement

[at a cost of {}] drachmas

Benjamin Mazar and his team found a fragmentary Greek inscription, intended to be inserted into a wall, south of the temple mount in debris in a pool (Isaac 1983). Isaac argues that it refers to a donor named Sparis or Paris, probably a Jew living in Rhodes. His gift was an area of the paving for the courtyard or, more likely given the find's location, of the platform south of the temple mount. Though the first line is missing, "year 20" must be part of a regnal formula and must refer to Herod, because Herod was the only king who ruled more than twenty years who was not also high priest. Herod's twentieth year was either 21/20 BCE, on one reckoning, or 18/17 BCE; on either reckoning the high priest was Simon, son of Boethos, high priest ca. 23–5 BCE. The form of the inscription conforms to many records of benefactions (see [Figure 10.8](#)).

5. Syros (?Delos)

King Herod to the people of...

Three fragments of a large Greek inscription were found in 1874 (sic), 1887, and 1988 on Syros (Mantzoulinou-Richards 1988; Noy, Panayotov, & Bloedhorn 2004, 246–7). The editor argues persuasively that the inscription's provenance was Delos, not Syros, where no large buildings from antiquity have been discovered. The letters are 12 cm ($4\frac{3}{4}$ ") high, on marble slabs that were part of the architrave of a large Doric building (*regulae* and *guttae* survive partially), probably from a portico or porch. There was a Jewish community on Delos, but the grand building of which these fragments were a part could hardly have been a building for Jews, as the reference to *dēmos* ("people") in the inscription also makes clear. The editor concludes the building was the *xystos* (covered colonnade in a gymnasium, possibly attached to a stadium).

Though partial, the inscription permits three important points: (1) Herod made benefactions to Greek communities where there were also Jewish communities, but the donations were not for Jews but for the people (*dēmos*) at large; (2) he sometimes made very large benefactions, as this case implies; and (3) records of his gifts have not always survived in the literature, so whatever deductions we draw about the range of his benefactions are likely to be minimal conclusions. It was a plausible

deduction that he might have given to Delos, but there was no evidence until the present detective work by Mantzoulinou-Richards. The editor links two other inscriptions with this, one of which (SEG 16.490) we have included below as # 28. The other we hesitantly include here as an addendum.

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5. *Addendum, Chios (SEG 16.488)*

[so and so was honored for such and such]
which he repaired with his own money
and for all the many and great things
he donated to the city and for his perpetually
providing anointment oil for the athletes
for his virtue and his benevolence
toward the city. The supervisor of the repairs
was Apollonios, son of Apollonios the Philologist.

We include this inscription following Mantzoulinou-Richards' discussion of # 5 from Syros-Delos. If that is properly attributed to a *xystos*, the allusions here to oil for athletes and repairs could cohere with it. It dovetails also with our # 10, below, in both title and the names Apollonios son of Apollonios. That dedication, however, was made on Delos, related to the Temple of Apollo, and the honoree was not our Herod but his son Antipas, the tetrarch. This dedication, on Chios, is arguably from the same period and directed to the same person, though nothing but plausibility links the inscription with any Herod. This addendum should not be attributed to Herod the king.

6. *Si'a, Temple of Ba'al Shamim (OGIS # 415)*

To King Herod, master,
Obaisath, son of Saodos
placed the statue at his own expense

W. H. Waddington copied a Greek inscription from a statue base, now lost, found on the porch to the right of the entrance of the Temple of Ba'al Shamim at Si'a. The Marquis de Vogüé found fragments of statues in the vicinity, some of less-than-life-size, including two heads that he

took back to Paris. A life-size statue of Herod must have stood there to judge from the foot still attached to the base, but the statue itself was missing. “Other fragments of this statue, and a badly mutilated torso, indicated to M. de Vogüé that Herod’s effigy had been the special object of early Christian violence” (Butler 1907, 379), though this explanation for its damaged state could well be fanciful.

A member of a family associated with Si’a—Obaisath and Saodos are both Nabatean names and are known from other inscriptions at Si’a (de Vogüé 1864)—donated the statue to the Temple of Ba’al Shamim. The inscription almost certainly referred to our Herod, the person known simply as “King Herod.” Its location in the porch to the right of the entrance door may imply Herod’s involvement in building the temple, the statue being a grateful public recognition by the tribe of Obaisath. Though the inscription is undated, the building’s construction period was late 30s BCE, and the inscription probably dates from the same period.

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Statues of Herod are unattested in Herod’s kingdom, so this evidence from just outside his territory is the evidence nearest the center of his power. That Herod appreciated recognition is a reasonable deduction, though he seems to have accepted no such honors in Jewish territory where it might cause offense. His title, “king,” was linked with a second honorific, “master” or “lord,” which suggests a patronal relationship between Obaisath and Herod.

7. *Athens, Acropolis, near Parthenon (OGIS # 414; CIAtt 3. 550)*

The people to King Herod

friend of Romans

because of his good works and good will toward the city.

Found east of the Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens in 1858, the base, which must have carried a statue, was apparently the gift of the Athenian *dēmos* in gratitude to Herod (Noy, Panayotov, & Bloedhorn 2004, 162–3). The inscription highlighted two aspects of Herod’s relationship to the Athenians—his “good works” (*euergesia*) and his “good will” (*eunoia*). Josephus gives the same impression when he says that Athens, among other cities, was “laden with Herod’s offerings” (*War* 1.425). A statue on the Acropolis implies that a portion of his largess was devoted to improvements of some kind there; the most logical explanation would be either contributions to some aspect of the

cult of Athena or, more likely, given the find-spot, contributions to the Temple of Roma and Augustus, which was located east of the Parthenon (Roller 1998, 219–20). A connection with Athens’ Temple of Roma and Augustus fits well with Herod’s three temples to the imperial cult in his own kingdom, and with his building activity in Nicopolis.

One of the inscription’s descriptive phrases is part of the title of this book: King Herod was “friend of Romans” (*philorōmaios*). The term is found in reference to others than Herod—it was the Greek equivalent of one part of the Latin phrase *rex socius et amicus populi Romani*, a designation given to some client kings (for example Ariobarzanes I of Cappadocia, Deiotarus of Galatia, Antiochus of Commagene), and also applied to Hyrcanus II as ethnarch.

8. Athens, Acropolis, near Erechtheion (OGIS 427; CIAtt 3. 551)

The people

to Herod the pious King and friend of the Emperor

because of his moral excellence and good works

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Dittenberger applied this inscription to Agrippa I (Marshall 2009, 168), also “King” briefly (cf. Acts 12:1), but it is likelier, given that Agrippa was usually referred to by the name Agrippa and given its location in Athens, to be our King Herod (Braund 2014, 78; Noy, Panayotov, & Bloedhorn 2004, 163–4; Marshak 2015, 155–6). Found on the Acropolis in Athens west of the Erechtheion in 1860, the inscription must have been connected with Herod’s gifts to the city. The inscription is slightly more effusive than the previous one, and strikes two additional notes: Herod was friend of the Emperor (a fact Josephus confirms) as in inscriptions 2 and 3, above; and he was a person of “piety” (*eusebēs*) and of “moral excellence” (*aretē*). If these terms seem discordant and overdone, at least they are consistent with contemporary inscriptional usage and they offer contemporary public counter-evaluations of Herod. Josephus uses the term “piety” without blushing (chapter 11), linked in part with Herod’s relationship to Augustus. The inscription is thus consistent with literary sources.

Both Agrippa I and Agrippa II might have used the phrase “Friend of Caesar,” as did Herod of Chalcis. For example, an inscription from Si’a reads: “Under Great King Agrippa, friend of Caesar, pious and friend of the Romans, the son of the Great King Agrippa, friend of the Romans,

Aphareus the freedman and his son Agrippa dedicated this” (Braund 2014, 234 #637).

9. *Athens, agora (SEG 12 [1955] 150)*

The people

for Herod the pious King and friend of the Emperor

because of his moral excellence and good works

This inscription was found in the agora in Athens in damaged condition (Merritt 1952, 370). Since the name is missing, it is not a certain testimony to Herod. The initial publication proposed restorations to give an identical reading to number 8, above.

10. *Kos, fortress gate (OGIS 416)*

Herod

—son of Herod the king—

Tetrarch

Philiōn Aglaos of the family of Nikon

his guest and friend

The inscription from Kos, found not in situ but in the western wall of the fortress’s anterior wall as part of the second gate, is addressed either to Herod’s son Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee (Jensen 2010, 209–11; Hoehner 1980, 106; Haeghamar 1993, 126), or less likely Philip, tetrarch of Gaulanitis, Auranitis, Batanea, and Trachonitis. Whichever is the case, he was identified as “son of Herod the king,” and it shows that that term usually meant in antiquity our Herod, unless clarified specifically; it also demonstrates that other members of the family were known as Herod, both popularly and formally. The elder Herod had donated funds to sustain the office of a gymnasiarch on Kos, so this is an instance of multiple generations continuing to share their largess with specific beneficiaries. There is a second inscription (SEG 43, 554) on Kos for Philion Aglaos (Buraselis 2000, 62).

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11. *Delos (OGIS 417)*

The Athenian people and those

living on the island,

for Herod, son of Herod the king,

tetrarch

on account of piety and good

will shown to them

when Apollonios, son of Apollonios of Phamnous was financial officer

An inscription was found on Delos in front of the Temple of Apollo (Marshall 2009, 145–9), also dedicated either to Philip or, more likely, to Antipas, specified as the “son of Herod the king,” and using adjectives noted above. King Herod is not recorded as having given any benefactions to Delos, though as the discussion above (# 5) suggests, it is probable. The reference to Athens in the first line reflects the fact that Delos was an Athenian colony and squares with the evidence of Herod’s benefactions to that city. This may strengthen the possibility that Herod had links with Delos. The location near a temple to Apollo may link with Herod providing funds to rebuild the Temple of Pythian Apollo at Rhodes.

12. *Berytus, forum* (CRAI [1927], 243–4)

Queen Berenice, daughter of the Great King Agrippa, and King Agrippa have completely rebuilt the temple, collapsed with age, which King Herod, their great-grandfather, had built, and adorned it with marbles and six columns

An unusual, though heavily restored, Latin inscription refers to three generations of the Herodian family: King Herod, his grandson Agrippa I, and, in primary place, his great-granddaughter Berenice and her brother (Braund 2014, 235; [Chapter 13](#)). We hear of the building in question, a temple built or rebuilt in Beirut by Herod, in *War* 1.422 in a list of projects alongside structures in Tyre, Ptolemais, Damascus, Sidon, Byblus, Tripolis, Laodicea-on-Sea, and Balanea. Its identification is not known, and this inscription is not more specific; the building may conceivably be not in Berytus itself but in Heliopolis (Baalbek), part of Berytus’s territory (Kropp 2013, 275ff; see [Figure 10.7](#)).

The inscription shows that, as noted earlier, “King Herod” *simpliciter* usually refers to our Herod, while the two Agrippas are most frequently self-identified by that name, here in both cases with the title king, but the father being specified with “great.” One feature of benefactions is still common in the world of patronage today: a century after the first benefaction the grandchildren were asked—or offered—to rebuild the temple “completely.”

13. *Rome (CIJ 173)*

... synagogue

... of the Herodians

... a blessing to all

We have already discussed this inscription, arguing that it may refer to a synagogue of the Herodians in Rome ([Chapter 6](#)). Our hypothesis, briefly, is that the Jewish community in Rome named a synagogue after Herod out of gratitude for Herod's constructive role with respect to Jewish privileges in the Diaspora at large, as other Roman Jewish communities did for Augustus, Marcus Agrippa, and Volumnius (possibly governor of Syria and a friend of Herod's) as well. If this is correct, the inscription suggests that during Herod's lifetime a Jewish community in Rome was more positive toward Herod than Josephus tells us Roman Jews were at his death, when they joined the Judean delegation's vigorous criticism of him.

14. *Rome (CIL VI 9005 = ILS 1795)*

To the spirit of Herod Coetus, taster for the divine Augustus,

afterward steward in the gardens of Sallust,

died nones of August in the consulate of M. Cocceius Nerva and C. Vibius Rufinus,

Julia Prima for her patron

An inscription from Rome mentions Herod's taster or cook, possibly willed by Herod to Augustus, who became active in Augustus's household. The relationship with "Julia Prima" is not further clarified, and which Julia this may be is unclear. The Julia most commonly referred to as "the elder" is Augustus's daughter Julia (exiled 2 BCE; died 14 CE), who was married successively to Marcellus, M. Agrippa, and Tiberius, but she seems unlikely; another possibility is his granddaughter Julia (exiled in 8 CE; died 28 CE). Another perhaps likelier possibility is Augustus's widow Livia (adopted into the Julian clan and often known as Julia after 14 CE; died 29 CE).

Coetus's career may have accounted for his being buried in Sallust's gardens when he died in Rome (Rocca 2008, 91), a garden first owned by Julius Caesar, then Sallust, and then Tiberius. There is some difficulty in dating the consuls mentioned, though the burial probably dates to about 21 or 22 CE (Syme 1989, 225).

15. *Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv*

of Herod

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This appears in a blog, attributed to the Eretz Israel Museum. Enquiries to the Museum elicited no reply; we include it in the interests of completeness, but suspect it is inauthentic.

16. *Paphos* (CIG 2.2628)

Hērōdēs

17. *Suleim/Selaema in the Hauran* (AJP 6 (1885): 213 # 57)

Hērōdēs

We owe these two fragmentary inscriptions to Marshak (Marshak 2015, 234 n.2); speculation is futile because neither shows anything more than the name Herod, apparently in the nominative; it is not at all certain that either of these refer to Herod the king. Inscription # 16, from Paphos, is potentially significant because it would be the only inscription bearing on Herod from Cyprus, where he was active and influential through his management of the imperial copper mines. It would be consistent with Herod's behavior to make a donation to Paphos; more than this tantalizing hint, we cannot say.

Frederic Allen reported long ago on #17, reading the word as *Ērōdēs*: “This word was carved in large letters and stood alone on the face of a block of basalt near the top of the well preserved temple at this place” (Allen 1885), referring to a temple site in the Nabatean town Suleim in northwest Auranitis, also known as Selaema, where a large temple was discovered in the nineteenth century (Merrill 1881, 32–4, with sketch). If we knew more about the temple and the inscription, it could influence interpretation of Herod's involvement with Nabatea.

Inscriptions of Agrippa I and Agrippa II

The next several generations of Herod's descendants were not generally identified in inscriptions by their relationship to Herod the king (but see Berytus inscription, # 12 above). We skip over inscriptions of Antipas and Philip (Marshall 2009, 145–9) to focus on the Agrippas. Occasionally, despite—or perhaps because of—the fact that Herod did not use the adjective “great,” Agrippa I and II used it of themselves on

inscriptions; in # 12 above Agrippa II referred to his father Agrippa I as “great.” Some of the terms applied to Herod recur in these inscriptions of the first century CE (the list is selective). We translate only portions immediately relevant to Herod’s descendants.

18. (*OGIS 418*)

For the deliverance of the powerful King Agrippa ...

19. (*OGIS 419*)

Concerning great King Agrippa, friend of the Emperor, pious, and friend of the Romans ...

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20. (*OGIS 420*)

Concerning great King Marcus Julius Agrippa, friend of the Emperor and friend of the Romans ...

21. (*OGIS 421*)

Concerning the great Marcus Julius Agrippa ...

22. (*OGIS 422*)

... for great King Agrippa ...

23. (*OGIS 423*)

... for King Agrippa the powerful.

24. (*OGIS 424*)

King Agrippa, friend of the Emperor [and friend of the Ro]mans ...

25. (*OGIS 425*)

... to the great powerful King Agrippa, his son Agrippa made it.

26. (*OGIS 426*)

... to the powerful King Agrippa.

27. (*OGIS 428*)

... daughter of King Julius Agrippa ...

28. (*SEG 16.490*)

The Great King ... has sent another donation ... a thousand denarii ... [the courier] Philatas son of Philatas.

This mixed bag of inscriptions underscores the restraint of Herod's inscriptional usage compared to that of his grandson and great-grandson. Most of the above inscriptions are from outside Judea, as was true of Herod, the elder. Still, it is relatively clear that the name Herod *simpliciter* was usually used of Herod of Judea; he was always referred to as "king" in these inscriptions (## 6–12 above). His son Antipas was sometimes called simply Herod, but he was tetrarch (not king) so there is little confusion. His son Philip was not usually called Herod. His grandson Agrippa I and his great-grandson Agrippa II were usually called Agrippa, not Herod, though in the case of the latter sometimes with full Roman name. It is Agrippa I who referred to himself during his short reign most often as "great" (*megas*), not Agrippa II, whose territory was more extensive and his reign longer. Inscriptions with this style then likely refer to Agrippa I: 19, 20, 21, 22, 28, and 25, the last of which clearly indicates that the earlier Agrippa was referred to as "great" and the later one not. Number 27, above, must refer to Agrippa I, since it refers to his daughter, likely Berenice. Since both Agrippa I and II have the same full name, it is not always possible to decide between them, so 23, 24, 26, and 27 are uncertain.

Finally, we add a close family member, an important bit player in Herod's family drama, Glaphyra, daughter of King Archelaus of Cappadocia. As noted earlier, she was married to Alexander, Herod's executed son ([Chapter 6](#)), and later married (briefly) to King Juba II of Mauretania (Roller 2003), who had previously been linked with Queen Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Cleopatra VII, Mark Antony's consort. Finally, she married Herod Archelaus, another of Herod's sons, ethnarch of Judea for a decade and removed by Augustus in 6 CE ([Chapter 13](#)).

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29. Athens (OGIS 363)

The Boule and [the Demos] honors Queen [Glaphyra] daughter of King Archelaus and wife of King Juba on account of her virtue.

The inscription from Athens does not identify the occasion for this honor. Like some other inscriptions noted above, it attests the practice of benefactions by client kings and their families to cities where they wished to enhance their stature and prestige, such as Athens, Delos, and Kos. Millar points out that Josephus says, incorrectly, that Glaphyra's marriage to Juba was dissolved after Juba's death (Millar 1993, 354–5).

Contextual inscriptions from Herod's time

In addition to inscriptions specifically mentioning King Herod and members of his family, there are others, of which this is a small selection, from the time of Herod that point to something relevant in a biographical study. The first two derive from his rebuilding of the temple.

30. Jerusalem, Soreg, warning (CIJ 2.1400)

No foreigner is to enter
the barriers surrounding
the sanctuary. He who
is caught will have
himself to blame for
his ensuing death.

Charles Simon Clermont-Ganneau found a full form of the inscription in Jerusalem in 1871, now in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul. A partial inscription discovered in 1935 is in the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem (OGIS 2.598; Bickerman 1946). For our purposes the inscription's primary significance is not so much the warning itself as secondary features: its reflection of pilgrimage by Jews ([Chapter 12](#)), its assumption that "foreigners" visited the temple in Jerusalem, its use of Greek to be understandable to visitors, the multiple warnings (at each of twelve gates through the barrier), and the congruity of locating the warning at the barrier (*soreg*) at the inner point of the court of gentiles (Richardson 2004; Chapter 16).

The warning prompts a minor question about the relationship between religious and civil responsibility for death sentences in such cases. While it seems rather clearly a public policy on a religious matter, the extent to which the death penalty for this offense was carried out is questionable, since there is no record of the imposition of the penalty during this period. Obviously, there was no punishment in the case of elite Romans such as Pompey, who transgressed the prohibition. Nor is it clear if there was such a public warning prior to Herod's rebuilding of the temple, and thus we cannot deduce what role, if any, he may have played in the inclusion of this warning in the reconstructed temple, or in its visibility and wording.

31. Jerusalem, Tyropoeon Valley (IAA 78-1439)

... to the place of trumpeting

The previous inscription was in Greek, so as to be readable by the many visitors—both Jewish and non-Jewish—to Jerusalem and its temple from around the Mediterranean world; this inscription is in beautifully executed Hebrew, intended to be read by priests serving in the temple. It was found during excavations in the Tyropoeon Valley in the street running below the southwest corner of the Temple Mount. Josephus says this was

the point where it was the custom for one of the priests to stand and to give notice, by sound of trumpet, in the afternoon of the approach, and on the following evening of the close, of every seventh day. The purpose was to announce to the people the respective hours for ceasing work and for resuming their labours.

(War 4. 582–3)

The stone's shape is consistent with it being a part of a parapet on the perimeter wall or the roof of the Royal Basilica, indicating where the priests stood to blow the trumpets.

The use of both Greek and Hebrew in temple inscriptions is not unexpected in Herod's rebuilding of the temple, but the evidence of both languages, both beautifully inscribed, in different and appropriate contexts underscores the care taken in its building. The handsome square Hebrew script illustrates cultic use; together with the correspondingly careful Greek inscriptions of the warnings, they emphasize the temple's bilingual public context.

Theodotus inscription, Jerusalem, lower city (CIJ 2.1404)

Theodotus, (son) of Vettenu, priest

and *archisynagogs*, son of an *archisynagogs*,

grandson of an *archisynagogs*, built

the synagogue for the reading of

the law and the teaching of the commandments,

and the guest-chamber and the rooms and the water

installations for lodging

for those needing them from abroad,

which his fathers, the

elders and Simonides founded

Our concerns are not whether Theodotus was the person referred to in Acts or in a narrow sense what the date of this inscription is. Kloppenborg's careful analysis concludes that it is early first century CE or late first century BCE (Kloppenborg 2000). The inscription's primary importance has to do with its evidence for the development of synagogues, their appurtenances, their officials, their presence in Judea, and so on. For our more limited purposes, however, the inscription attests the public visibility of Jewish visitors to Jerusalem who needed accommodations: a "guest-chamber and the rooms and the water installations for lodging for those needing them." Such facilities were not provided in or around the temple, so it was an almost sacred function to offer accommodation in a local synagogue, though it can hardly be supposed that there were sufficient "guest-chambers" in the synagogues of Jerusalem to meet the needs of all the visitors at the time of a major festival. Nevertheless, we have here evidence of at least one generous synagogue that tried to anticipate the needs of the host of visitors to the Herodian temple.

Persons in Herod's story

There is almost no end of other inscriptions that could be marshalled to shed some light on Herod's story and family; we limit ourselves to a small assortment that may bear on persons close to him in one way or another.

32. *Jerusalem, Givat Hamivtar (Rahmani 1994 #350)*

I, Abba, son of the priest

Eleaz[ar], son of Aaron the high [priest],

I, Abba, the oppressed

and the persecuted (?),

who was born in Jerusalem,

and went into exile into Babylonia

and brought [back to Jerusalem] Mattathi[ah],

son of Jud[ah], and buried him in a

cave which I bought by deed

The Tomb of Abba was uncovered north of the Old City in Givat

Hamivtar in 1970; this inscription in ancient Hebrew letters on a wall of the chamber has given rise to much discussion and debate, including the identity of the person(s) buried in the tomb's beautifully decorated but uninscribed ossuary. One theory is that the remains—thought to be of more than one person and “principally of a woman” (Smith 1977)—are those of Mattathiah Antigonus, the Hasmonean king who sought Parthian help against Herod as he attempted to occupy the land the Roman Senate had recently given him (Chapter 4). Mattathiah was defeated and executed by the Romans in 37 BCE. Some of the bones in the ossuary showed cut marks, sometimes interpreted as signs of decapitation. Thus, it is possible the wall inscription refers to one of Herod's opponents, but elevating the possibility to a probability would require more evidence than is presently available. *Non liquet*.

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33. Jerusalem, Mount Scopus (Rahmani #41)

Shim'on of (the family of) Boethos

of Boethos

This ossuary inscription is in Hebrew, though *Boethon* is likely a transliteration from Greek. It may be the ossuary of Simon, Herod's father-in-law, son of Boethos, whom Josephus listed as High Priest (ca. 23–4 BCE) appointed by Herod. Simon, originally from Alexandria, was the father of Mariamme II (Chapter 12), the mother of Philip, Tetrarch of Gaulanitis and the adjacent regions. The ossuary's face has six panels of differing widths; the second panel has a representation of an altar, which strengthens the possibility that the ossuary is connected with a priestly family (Rahmani 1994, 20, 86). We speculate below that Simon—who had a relatively long high-priestly role compared with the roles of other high priests under Herod—may have played some part in the rebuilding of the temple (Chapter 11).

34. Jerusalem, Mount of Offence (Rahmani 1994 #117)

Yehuda son of Illma

Found on the Mount of Offence, this ossuary, too, contains an inscription that may refer to one of Herod's high priests. The Hebrew name “Illma” (Ellema) is similar to the name of the father of a high priest, Joseph son of Ellemos, who served one day in 4 BCE, because of the semen impurity of the serving high priest, Matthias. The rather crudely carved ossuary, however, hardly looks appropriate for an elite family from which a high priest might have come.

Simon, builder of the sanctuary

Simon, builder of the sanctuary

There is little doubt about the intention of the inscription on this ossuary, found at Givat Hamivtar in 1968; it was meant to distinguish Simon from his contemporaries because of his role in the temple's reconstruction. Simon's identity is unknown, as is his role as temple builder, whether major or minor, whether priest or layman: was Simon a master mason or was he a priest with some kind of oversight? (Safrai says priest, Naveh says mason; Naveh 1970, 34.) Obviously he was proud of his involvement, likely a substantial involvement, since this is the only inscriptional testimony to a builder of the temple. Simon's connection with Herod, if any, is likewise unknown. The ossuary has the same Hebrew wording on both the face and one end with slight differences (in one form being a transliteration of the Greek; Rahmani 1994, 199).

36. *Jerusalem, Mount Scopus (Rahmani #490)*

of Phasaël

and of Iphigenia

of Phasaël his son

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“Phasaël,” the name of one of Herod's brothers, was found on an unusually deeply incised ossuary from Mount Scopus; “and of Iphigenia” is carefully inscribed with double lines. Rahmani says this is “the first local occurrence of the name [Phasaël] in a Jewish inscription,” though it is “found in a number of Palmyrene, Safaitic and, especially, Nabataean inscriptions of the first and second centuries” (Rahmani 1994, 187). The inscription's significance is that it attests the name, not some association with Herod; Rahmani speculates that this Phasaël may have been a Palmyrene or Nabatean who married into a Jewish family. “Iphigenia” is a surprise, for it is an ill-omened name with strong pagan connotations. The names are all in Greek.

In addition to the above, other ossuaries attest the popularity of the names of three of Herod's wives, the two Mariammes (e.g., Rahmani 1994, # 108 and # 333, with a number of variants) and Doris (Rahmani 1994, # 266), all in Greek. There is nothing to suggest association with King Herod.

In sum, no ossuary bears with certainty on Herod's story, except in the sense that some—Simon the builder, for example, and two high priests—may have been involved in Herod's activities. They are useful to attest the common use, and the form of that usage, of names that appear in the Herodian accounts, of which we have displayed a small number. The possibility that we have the burial place of Mattathiah Antigonus, Herod's earliest rival, is tantalizing, but the possibility cannot be lifted to probability.

We could extend the inscriptions' range to include persons who enter Herod's story, but the list would be so extensive as to be unhelpful. We include, however, one splendid example, unrepresentative in terms of its size and significance. An inscription above the entrance to the commercial forum in Ephesus illustrates clearly the epigraphic habits of elite Romans. Here, the benefactors were Mazaeus and Mithridates, slaves of Augustus and of Agrippa, who had been set free and sent to Ephesus as officers in charge of maintaining properties there. They constructed the monumental gate in honor of their imperial patrons in 3 BCE: Augustus and Livia on one panel, and Agrippa and Julia on a second panel, dated just before her disgrace and exile. The only known Herodian inscription that even distantly approaches a similar degree of ostentation is # 5 (above) from Delos/Syros:

37. Ephesus, in situ, Commercial Agora Propylaea

Panel A

Emperor Augustus, son of Caesar the God, Consul for the 12th time, holding tribunician power for the 20th time, and Livia, wife of Caesar Augustus. By Mazaeus

Panel B

Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, Consul for the third time, Emperor holding tribunician power for the 6th time, and Julia, daughter of Caesar Augustus. Mithridates Patron

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Conclusion

Inscriptions had a very wide range of intentions and styles and audiences in the ancient world, but in one way or another all were meant to be seen—even if by a limited audience—and understood, whether inscriptions in a temple setting (Si'a, Jerusalem, Athens, Beirut), a synagogue (Jerusalem, Rome), an agora (Ephesus, Ashdod), a tomb or

ossuary (Jerusalem), a wine amphora or a garum jug (Masada). They were public affirmations of something important: status, wealth, legal standard, ownership, generosity, or connections. Some anticipated only a very restricted reading public—for example, a priestly instruction, or ossuaries, or wine jugs—but even those were usually done carefully, artistically, and in the appropriate language. Typically they said something important, something useful to know, or at the very least something to aid understanding.

King Herod was “friend of Romans” and “friend of the Emperor”; the other adjectives describing him are the sort of adulatory descriptions expected in major benefactions (a person of “piety,” “good works,” “good will,” “moral excellence”). Widely distributed inscriptions refer to the person of Herod the king: Masada, Jerusalem, Ashdod, Si‘a, Rome, Athens, Kos, and Delos, and with some uncertainty Selaema in Auranitis. All were areas where Herod was active; in some cases, such as Athens and Kos, there is confirming literary evidence of benefactions.

Inscriptional notices were stereotyped, as one expects in public displays; still, inscriptions referring to Herod seem unusually reserved. By comparison with later generations in his family the language is restrained, whereas his descendants made rather frequent use of *kyrios*, “powerful”; “great” is absent from the epigraphic evidence for Herod, but is found in inscriptions of Agrippa I, conforming, as we shall see, with its absence from Herod’s coins. When Josephus uses “great” (*Ant.* 18.130–6) he simply means the “elder” Herod, it seems, though it is possible Josephus thinks of it as a title used of Agrippa I which he applies to Agrippa’s grandfather (Ewald 1874, 5.473; Madden 1864, 83–4; Smallwood 1981, 60, n.1). The one essential identifier in Herodian inscriptions is “king,” beyond question the most crucial self-identification for the son of Antipater who had reached the peak of power and influence that was available to him.

Numismatics

Coins provide another window into the self-perceptions of those who mint them, even more illuminating than inscriptions, since inscriptions’ frames of reference—especially if they were attached to buildings—were limited, specific to the building and its location. By contrast, coins’ legends and symbols were designed for the whole population where the coins circulated. Coins were likely to have both a broader impact and a larger political intentionality. We are fortunate to have available studies that have dealt in depth with Herod’s coinage, though it was only two decades ago, in 1994, that the first work dedicated solely to the coinage

of Herod was published by Skowronek, a work that has not gained much attention and that we have not been able to access. We rely especially on the latest study (Ariel & Fontanille 2012) and Ariel's dissertation on which their book is based (Ariel 2006).

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Figure 10.1 Coin of Herod, large denomination. Obverse, helmet with straps topped by star, and palm branches, on couch-element. Reverse, year three on left of tripod, monogram on right, with inscription $\text{HP}\Omega\Delta\text{ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ}$ ("of Herod the king"). The usual view is that it was struck in 37 BCE in Jerusalem, though Marshak, and most recently Jacobson, argue it was struck in 27 BCE in Samaria, and that year 3 represents an Actian era.



Figure 10.2 Coin of Herod, half denomination. Obverse, cornucopia. Reverse, eagle facing right. The eagle—looking more Tyrian or Nabatean than Roman—is not unlike eagles found on earlier Yehud coins. It may represent the eagle over the gate of the temple hacked off by the Torah students. Struck ca. 15 BCE in Jerusalem.

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Ya'akov Meshorer's early work on the coins of Judea helped to establish a sliver of scholarship devoted to the numismatics of Herod, on which virtually all recent scholars have built (Meshorer 1967, 1982). Ariel and Fontanille advance the level of discourse on Herod's coinage and establish data around which discussions of Herod's coins can take place. We agree, in the main, with their conclusions and use their work as the bedrock of our overview.

Josephus does not dwell on Herod's coins, nor does he mention any tales of Herod and his choices for coin typology, denominations, or his mint location, issues debated today by those who study Herod's numismatics. For the most part, Herod's coinage is unimpressive, compared to the imperial coinage of Rome or the surrounding Eastern provinces; it is plain, its symbols simple and lacking in detail, and their value small, consisting solely of bronzes. Herod did not mint large-denomination coins in gold or silver, nor did he use the coins in blatant self-promotion as Augustus did, a trait particularly clear in Augustus's coins marking the apotheosis of Julius Caesar, his (adoptive) father, and those bearing on his struggles with Antony (Zanker 1988, 33–77). Herod's minting only in bronze followed the precedent set by the Hasmoneans before him, and followed after him by the Roman procurators of Judea. While some have tried to argue from literary evidence that Herod minted silver coinage, we have no surviving examples if he did. Others have argued that Herod, as a client king, would not have been allowed to mint silver or gold coinage by the Romans (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 37, referring to Mommsen 1860). This too is unsubstantiated. Coinage was one area in which a client king could, ostensibly, do as he pleased and we have no legends that substantiate Rome's official permission to its client kings (Dahmen 2010, 100; Kropp 2013, 231). While some have argued that only kings who had minted silver prior to their swearing fealty to Rome could mint silver coins, Juba II of Numidia and Mauretania is an example of a king installed by Augustus who minted silver coins. In addition to the Mauretanian rulers, the Nabateans, neighbors of Herod but not yet under Rome's control, also minted silver coinage (Dahmen 2010, 101–3;

Kropp 2013, 240–3). Still, in the Near East most client kings limited themselves to smaller denominations and minted mainly in bronze in an attempt to show deference to Rome (Kropp 2013, 231), so Herod's coinage is in keeping with coinage of his contemporaries, small and inoffensive. Herod's determination to be agreeable to both Rome and his more conservative subjects led to a reduced repertoire of images compared to his fellow client kings. One scholar looking at the coinage of Herod remarked, “nous allons reconnaître que la numismatique du roi Hérode est en réalité fort pauvre” (de Saulcy 1854, 127). Indeed.

Still, Herod's coinage can assist in understanding the ways he navigated the cultures to which he was beholden and by which he was influenced: he was cautious, chose only simple, inoffensive, and tried symbols on his coins, choosing an innocuous middle ground rather than minting purely Jewish or Roman coins. We depart from earlier work on the meaning of the coins' images, following the findings of Ariel and Fontaine. For our purposes, the important questions are the various types of coins, their inscriptions, their sources, and the mint(s).

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Herod's coins

Herod's coins fall into two categories, those with a date and those without a date. All the dated coins were minted in year three (LF), whereas we have no idea when the undated coins were minted (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 1). The dated coins are of four denominations and, compared with other local coins of the time, are of reasonably high quality with respect to design and execution. In contrast, the undated coins are quite crude in all aspects; they make up, however, the majority of Herod's surviving coinage. We concentrate on those most relevant in shedding light on Herod.

Herod's lack of creativity is shown by the fact that the only phrase appearing on his coins is ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΗΡΩΔΟΥ (*basileōs hērōdou*), the genitive form, “of King Herod,” standard in ancient inscriptions. His monolingual coinage followed the precedent of the Seleucids, who by and large minted coins with Greek inscriptions, breaking away from the Hasmonean tradition of bilingual coins, Greek with either Hebrew or Aramaic as the second language. The coins of Hyrcanus II, with whom Herod's fortunes were so tightly bound in the years prior to 40 BCE, were always in Hebrew, though occasionally with Greek monograms on the reverse (similar to Tyrian, Seleucid, and Ptolemaic coins) that

probably referred to Antipater, Herod's father, Hyrcanus's financial minister, and head of the mint (Meshorer 1967, 46; Kanael 1952, 52–5): the monograms included *alpha*, *alpha* contained within *pi*, *alpha* above *pi*, and either *alpha* (?) or *lambda* alone. The only other marks on Herod's coins are the date LΓ and two ligatures that appear on some coins, perhaps the mint masters' initials or mark, though that is hotly debated. The symbol (not letter) L stood for year, so LΓ on the dated coins represents “in year three” (of Herod's reign).



Figure 10.3 Herod, half denomination. Obverse, anchor with partial inscription “of king Herod.” Reverse, galley, with oars, aphlaston (stern-post), and a well-detailed ram. Struck ca. 14–12 BCE in Jerusalem; in our view it likely commemorates Herod's Black Sea expedition in 14 BCE.



Figure 10.4 Coin of Herod. Reverse, ΗΡΩΔΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ (“of Herod the king”) surrounding a helmet with crest, flanked by date (“year three”) and monogram. Obverse, Macedonian shield with a decorated rim, surrounded by row of dots. Probably struck in 37 BCE in Jerusalem; Marshak and also Jacobson make the same argument as in [Figure 10.1](#).

The ligatures only appear on dated coins and in appearance look something like a *chi* and a *rho* or a *tau* and a *rho* combined. There are at least nine different scholarly interpretations of this ligature, some more fanciful than others, the likeliest explanation being a monogram of the name of someone involved in the minting. The monograph is not Herod’s own, for the inscription already makes clear that the coins are his. Rappaport suggests this must be the monogram of the mint master (Rappaport 1981, 365), while Ariel and Fontanille suggest it is the monogram of the magistrate responsible for the issue of the coin, who had direct supervision of the production of new coin issues; his monogram would be a sort of quality control stamp. Ariel and Fontanille note “unidentified monograms and abstract symbols were the rule, not the exception” (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 126). Since we know very few of the names of magistrates in the southern Levant, we are unlikely to discover this person’s identity.

The symbols on the coins

The dated coins are of seven types: helmet, tripod, shield, fruit, winged caduceus, aphlaston (stern-post of an ancient ship curving forward over the deck), and palm branch. The helmet and the tripod appear on the largest coins (*TJC* 44). The dated coins feature what Ariel and Fontanille deem “symbols,” meaning “secondary iconographic elements” that

“appear alongside the main types”: they consist of the palm branch and the fillet (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 43). The undated coins have a wider assortment of symbols than the dated coins, perhaps because the production of the undated coins spanned a wider range of time or because different people were in charge of the undated coins’ images. The images on the undated coins comprise: diadem, three-legged table, anchor, one palm branch, two palm branches, vine branches (?), one cornucopia, two cornucopias, galley, and eagle. The undated coins also feature two symbols: palm branches and wreath. There is little overlap between the dated and undated coins: only the palm branch appears in both sets of coins.

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Interpretations of these symbols fall broadly into several possible approaches: view them through an explicitly Roman lens, through a Hellenistic lens, through a “Jewish” lens, or in a functional way.

For example, from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, scholars took the symbol on the obverse of Herod’s largest coin to be a helmet (de Saulcy 1854, 127; Akerman 1846, 135; Madden 1864, 107; Hill 1914, xcvi; BMC Pal: and Hunkin 1926, 299). Later, Meshorer suggested that the image was based on coinage current in Rome so that what Ariel and Fontanille call “type two” of the helmets (TJC 64) is not a helmet, but an *apex* (part of the pontifical accoutrement), along with the *aspergillum* (an implement for the sprinkling of holy water), axe, *culullus* (horn-shaped vessel), and *simpulum* (ladle with long handle). The problem with Meshorer’s identification is twofold. First, he shies away from suggesting the *apex* on Herod’s coins had any cultic significance, holding it was imported wholesale from contemporary Roman coins. But why would Herod have chosen such a potent image of a foreign cult if it were not to represent Roman religious conceptions of power? There were plenty of other images on republican coinage from which to choose. Second, the overall appearance of Herod’s coinage was inoffensive to a Jewish audience, which forced Meshorer to see the *apex* as simply a “Roman” image imported at random by Herod. But a foreign cultic object, particularly one from Rome, would be quite offensive to a predominantly Jewish audience. Jewish elites, like Herod, would have been aware of what the *apex* symbolized in Rome, making it highly suspect for his first coins.



Figure 10.5 Herod's rarest coin, produced with a single pair of dies, the reverse of which broke after a small number were struck (Fontanille, private communication). The reverse's vine branches may allude to the temple's golden vine (*Ant.* 15.395; *War* 5.210), just as the eagle type may allude to the eagle over the temple gate. The obverse's three-legged table is surrounded by a legend, of which ΙΑΕ—of ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ—are visible.

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Figure 10.6 Coin of Herod. Herod's most common coin (about 70 percent of all Herod's coins) with an abbreviated legend ΒΑCΙΑ ΗΡΩ ("Herod the king") surrounding an anchor on the obverse; on the reverse a double cornucopia with a caduceus, a design inspired by Hasmonean coins of John Hyrcanus and Alexander Janneus. Struck in Jerusalem ca. 10–5 BCE.

In contrast to Meshorer's explicitly Roman explanation, Wirgin suggests that the helmet represented the *pileus*, the distinctive cap of the Dioscuri, which symbolized "the powers of the divine heroes" and "the descent of the virtues of the Dioscuri" onto the hat, and thus onto Herod (Wirgin 1960, 182). Jacobson agrees that the coin depicted the *pileus*, but he sees the object below not as a hat but a couch on which the *pileus* rested. He supports his interpretation with a coin of Archelaus of Cappadocia, the father-in-law of Herod's son Alexander (BMC Gal.: 45, ## 8 and 9), but the designs of the two coins bear no resemblance to each other. Jacobson views the image of the enthroned *pileus* as a symbol of Herod's victory in 37 BCE (Jacobson 1986, 152, 157).

Marshak also accepts the interpretation of this symbol as the *pileus* of the Dioscuri, but instead of seeing it as a symbol of victory, he reads the *pileus* alongside the fruit image, which he takes to be a poppy, a symbol of Demeter and Kore, so the composite image is about the cycle of life (Marshak 2006, 229; Marshak 2015, 162). It follows that such symbolism might also have touched on the idea of immortality, a bold subject for Herod to take up.

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In contrast to Meshorer's Roman view of the helmet and the various Hellenistic views of Wirgin, Jacobson, and Marshak, Schwentzel argues for a Jewish interpretation of the symbol, calling it the "Helmet of Salvation" of Isaiah 59:17 (Schwentzel 2007, 593). Thus, for Schwentzel, the helmet represents Herod's victory as having been won by the God of Israel. He agrees with Jacobson's suggestion that the helmet rests on a couch, but he suggests the couch was in the Temple at Jerusalem (Schwentzel 2007, 591).

Drawing on Schwentzel's suggestion, Ariel and Fontanille suggest that their Type one (TJS 44) helmet may depict Herod's own helmet, set up in the Temple for all to see, arguing from contemporary *comparanda* for military leaders who had distinctive and easily recognizable helmets (e.g., Plutarch *Alexander* 16.7; Plutarch *Pyrrhus* 11.5; Livy 27.33.108). Type one's decoration of ivy leaves is both consistent across all extant examples and unique within the larger corpus of Roman client king coinage; no one else's helmet looks the same. On this view, Herod not only showed his victory with the Type one coin, but also came as close as he dared to a self-portrait. While he could not have depicted his likeness, as Roman emperors did, he depicted his helmet, instantly recognizable as his to friend and foe alike on the battlefield.

A plain reading of the symbol is best; the helmet is just a helmet, representing Herod's military victory and the end of hostilities in 37 BCE. Further, Ariel and Fontanille's suggestion that the helmet may be Herod's own also seems correct. Was Herod obeying the letter of the law but not its spirit by using a multi-valent and not explicitly offensive image as a substitute for his likeness? Until other depictions, however, of such a helmet emerge in clearly Herodian contexts, Ariel and Fontanille's suggestion should be taken as a helpful conjecture.

The reverse of Ariel and Fontanille's Type one (*TJC* 44) is a tripod, which has led to similar speculation. Meshorer sees it as a copy of Roman Republican coins with tripods (Meshorer 1982, 2:19). Jacobson sees the tripod as an explicit reference to the cult of Apollo, pointing out that the Seleucids had frequent recourse to the tripod as a symbol of their house's descent from Apollo. Ariel and Fontanille point to Herod's links to Apollo and his cult, shown at Rhodes by his rebuilding of the Temple of Pythian Apollo (*War* 1.423; *Ant* 16.147, with differing details; Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 18, 110) and at Delos by one of his sons (Antipas or Philip) leaving an inscription before the Temple of Apollo (*OGIS* 417; see above). Both Kindler and Schwentzel interpret the image as an object in the Jerusalem temple. Ariel and Fontanille note that the tripod is flanked by "small pellets," which were unique to Herod's coins and not yet fully decoded; they suggest that the pellets represented "the contents of the bowl upon the tripod," making the tripod into a container of fruit or grain (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 110; Fontanille & Ariel 2006, 76, n.3). They offer a new suggestion for its interpretation; athletes and other victors often received tripods as trophies for their victories, so this tripod may be Herod's way of celebrating his victory over Antigonus in 37 BCE (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 110).

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It seems logical that the primary purpose of the coin's tripod is to symbolize Herod's military victory, with the helmet on the obverse making the nature of the victory clear. Herod may even have realized the polyvalent meanings of a simple tripod and hoped it would speak to the coin's Jewish and non-Jewish users alike.

Ariel and Fontanille's Type two (*AJC* 45), featuring a shield on the obverse and a helmet on the reverse, should also symbolize his recent victory. While various scholars offer emendations and nuanced interpretations of this general theory, almost everyone interprets it as celebrating Herod's recent victory over Antigonus, and we do as well

Two other symbols of Herod's dated coins—the winged caduceus and the *aphlaston*—deserve discussion: both are well-known Greco-Roman images; neither derives from Israelite tradition. By the late first century BCE they were well-known symbols of abstract ideas as well as explicitly pagan ideas. Meshorer's suggestion that later haggadic references point to the caduceus as a symbol of the bronze serpent made by Moses seems forced (Meshorer 1982, 2:27). Ariel and Fontanille note the winged caduceus was a symbol of the god Hermes; while Hermes was best known as the messenger god, he was also the god of trade and commerce. Indeed, the winged caduceus was a popular image in antiquity, not just on coins but also on scale weights. Here on Herod's coins it may be a symbol of trade and negotiation rather than of Hermes himself (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 111). Minting coins with the symbol for trade in the wake of a bloody conflict would have been an astute move on Herod's part; he would have been eager to re-establish, strengthen, and protect the region's trade as its new leader.

The *aphlaston* is both a symbol of the city of Ascalon and a general symbol of naval victory. In Roman imperial coinage it is only used as a “trophy” of sorts, appearing in the grasp of either a victor or Neptune himself. Zanker suggests that the *aphlaston* is a symbolic trophy of the enemy's ship, so that a commander holding one in his hands symbolized his naval victory (Zanker 1988, 39); though Zanker's examples are all too late to have influenced Herod, he could be using the symbol to denote a naval victory (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 112). Since Herod could not have depicted himself, much less the god Neptune, grasping the *aphlaston*, his use of the image is abstract.

Among Herod's undated coins, the anchor appears to have had a similar polyvalent meaning as the *aphlaston* on the dated coins. Meshorer, while not embracing a polyvalent reading of the anchor, implies such a reading by noting both that “it is possible that Herod used this design to emphasize his role as the successor to the Hasmonean kings” and also that “it is possible that Herod depicted the anchor to manifest his special interest in the coastal cities and in maritime trade” (Meshorer 1982, 2.26). Most scholars take one view or the other. Jacobson and Hoover think Herod co-opted the anchor from the coins of Alexander Janneus that were based on earlier Seleucid types (Jacobson 1986, 79; Hoover 2003, 36; Rocca 2008, 35; see [Figures 10.3](#); 10.6). Hoover goes a step farther than Jacobson and claims the anchor is a symbol of the Hasmonean royal house, with Herod's earlier use of the symbol intended to demonstrate his rule continued that royal house's rule (Hoover 2003, 36), though he also thinks the anchor with

the galley on another of Herod's coins is a symbol of the sea, not a reference to the Hasmoneans. Others posit that the anchor symbolizes the subsuming of the coastal region, with its cities Gaza, Anthedon, Jaffa, and Straton's Tower, into Herod's territory in 30 BCE (Meysan 1959, 118). Herod's anchors, however, differ from the Hasmonean and Seleucid types, being upright, not inverted, in orientation and having rings on their sides, which might suggest that the coin was designed primarily to showcase Herod's acquisition of the coastal regions (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 54–6). They say the majority of viewers of the coin would not have understood this and instead would have assumed that Herod was mimicking Hasmonean and Seleucid coins, so the anchor held a polyvalent meaning for Herod and his audience. We agree that Herod might have chosen the anchor as a symbol to showcase both the enlargement of his territory and his connections to the Hasmonean dynasty.

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This brings us to the third of Herod's maritime symbols, the galley, a symbol that had not appeared on Jewish coins before, though it had appeared on Seleucid coins. The rare coin was probably minted for only a brief time, which led Meshorer to two conclusions: the coin was a commemorative piece, and the event commemorated was the dedication of the harbor at Caesarea Maritima in 12 BCE (Meshorer 1982, 2.28). Ariel and Fontanille tentatively agree with Meshorer's conclusions, barring a more robust suggestion, adding that they think this type may have been Herod's last (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 115, 184–5; see [Figure 10.3](#)).

While we agree with the idea of commemoration, we think the event commemorated was not the harbor's construction but the launching of Herod's fleet and its deployment in 14 BCE to assist Marcus Agrippa in his Black Sea expedition. An image of the harbor itself—a lighthouse, or a temple—would have better commemorated the harbor, since the city was so striking upon entrance from the sea; a fleet, however, could only be commemorated by the depiction of a ship. Sending the fleet to aid Marcus Agrippa was an important event for Herod; it was the only time his fleet saw Roman action and the event cemented the friendship between Marcus Agrippa and Herod. The coin recalled for everyone handling it that Herod had supported Marcus Agrippa in an important expedition, during which they had visited important Diaspora Jewish communities *en route*. Herod had good reason to mint such a coin (Meysan 1959, 119; [Chapter 6](#)).

Finally, we examine the most debated undated coin type. The eagle is the only image of a living being on any of Herod's coins; there is no scholarly consensus on its significance for a first-century Jewish audience. Part of this confusion arises from the "eagle affair" that Josephus recounts (*War* 1.648–55; *Ant.* 17.150–60; [Chapter 1](#)). Most studies of Herod's coins assume the eagle on the coin is a reference to the golden eagle Herod affixed to the temple's gate, and this leads scholars to interpret both eagle images in one of two ways: either they force both images into an allusion to an offensive Roman image used by a Herod so secure in his power that he would risk the populace's wrath, or they make the eagle a definitively Jewish symbol. Neither attempt is very convincing, because neither deals with all the evidence. By contrast, Ariel and Fontanille note that the eagle coins were similar to coins minted both by the Ptolemies and by Tyre during the same era (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 115–16), to which we may add that the eagle resembles those found on Nabatean coins. It is possible that Herod decided to mint a coin similar to those in circulation in the region; of course, why this would be the only living being he placed on a coin remains something of a mystery. One explanation may be that the Tyrian silver shekel with an eagle was the coin used regularly by Jews to pay the half-shekel head tax at the temple in Jerusalem, and this despite the image of the god Melkart on the obverse (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 118–19; Marshak 2015, 286; Richardson 1992). Herod's choice of the eagle on his coin may have been meant to evoke the Tyrian shekel and by extension the temple itself. Given the populace's acceptance of the rather *outré* Tyrian shekel, Herod may well have thought his coin inoffensive in the eyes of his subjects.

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As discussed in [Chapter 1](#), the eagle on the temple gate had likely been there for several uneventful years before anyone attempted to remove it, suggesting an acceptance of this image near the temple precincts. While one need not assume that an eagle on a coin and an eagle on a temple gate were related, the Tyrian shekel may tip the scales toward the coin's reference to the temple. Because Herod's subjects accepted the Tyrian shekel for the temple payment, he may have felt he could make a coin like his neighbors' that featured the image of a living creature, already in circulation in his kingdom. In this scenario, Herod's caution was evident from his use of an image already on coins, rather than an unknown and untested image.

The mint(s) of Herod's coins

Until the mid-twentieth century scholars believed Jerusalem was the natural location for Herod's mint, since it was his capital. With respect to the undated coins, this remains the consensus. Scholars, however, began to debate whether ΛΓ represented year three of Herod's reign or another date of importance to Herod, and once that discussion started, it was necessary to decide where the mint was located. Places all over Herod's territory, from Ascalon (Rappaport 1981, 363–6) to Samaria-Sebaste (Meshorer 2001, 61–3; Marshak 2006, 226–30), and from Trachonitis (Narkiss 1936, 33–4) to Tyre (Meyshan 1959, 115), have been proposed. The site with the most merit is Samaria-Sebaste, where most of the dated coins were found (Meshorer 2001, 62). Meshorer notices that the dated coins of Herod make up only 2 percent (at most) of all recovered coinage of Herod, yet only 1 percent of the dated coins are from Jerusalem, 0.25 percent are from Masada, and a surprising 23 percent are from Samaria, hence Herod's mint must have been there. Ariel and Fontanille concur with these numbers, but they note that “the spatial distribution of most of the ΛΓ coins from Samaria was rather restricted”; the coins likely came from a single neighborhood or a single compound within Samaria-Sebaste (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 78, 163, 94; especially tables 9, 21). Josephus tells us that Herod paid off the Roman troops in Jerusalem to keep them from plundering the city in 37 BCE (*Ant.* 14.482), so perhaps the coins came from Roman troops who converted their silver pay to smaller denomination bronzes, and then spent the money upon their relocation to Samaria-Sebaste following the taking of Jerusalem. In any case, the coins may have been brought into Samaria rather than being minted there.

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The date of 38/37 BCE for the ΛΓ symbol on the coins remains the most logical explanation, and fits well with the military victory images. But this creates a problem: how could Herod's year three coins have been minted in Jerusalem, since he took Jerusalem only in mid-37 BCE, or, if Mahieu is correct, in 36 BCE (see Introduction)? Could Herod use the Hasmonean mint at such an early period? Josephus tells us that one of Herod's first projects after gaining control of Jerusalem was turning metal objects into money to be sent to Antony as gifts, though he does not tell us its form (*War* 1.358), and perhaps he sent bullion rather than coins. Even if Josephus does not mention this specifically, it makes sense that Herod would have started coining bronze as soon as he was able, in addition to sending precious metals to Antony. It was in Herod's best interest to pay his soldiers as quickly as he sent tribute to Antony, so he may have paid them in bronze.

While an absolute chronology of Herod’s coins is impossible, we can conjecture a set of dates for the different coins, based on interpretations of the symbol’s meaning with respect to key events in Herod’s reign. Arguably the largest contribution of Ariel and Fontanille to the field of Herodian numismatics is their creation of a comprehensive relative chronology of Herod’s coins based on this method of reconstruction. Here we simply summarize their proposals for the dates of Herod’s coin types in a table.

We conclude this brief overview of Herod’s coinage with a few observations on what Herod’s coinage can and cannot tell us about the king and his reign. As noted above, it is limited in variety and poor in quality in comparison to the coinage of contemporary rulers. Herod’s minting of only bronze coinage, however, was in keeping with most other client kings’ minting practices of the time—minting small denominations not likely to offend the Romans. From the infrequent minting and the shoddy quality of the coinage, we can infer that Herod was not trying to monetize Judea’s economy. His chief reasons for minting coins were to create a source of money to pay off his own costs and to propagandize his subjects subtly (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 27), as well as to facilitate trade. Despite the poor quality of the bronze coins, their usefulness to Herod should not be overlooked. Indeed, being smaller and “fractional” in nature, the creation of the bronze coins allowed Herod never to pay more than was necessary for any bill or settlement, a problem if he had only used silver coinage as payment, particularly for soldiers’ wages (Ariel & Fontanille, 24).

Table 10.1 Ariel and Fontanille’s proposed dates for coin types

Ariel and Fontanille's Proposed Dates for Coin Types

<i>Large Coins</i>	<i>Medium Coins</i>	<i>Small Coins</i>
Diadem/table (type 5) ca. 30 BCE	LG Coins (types 1–4) 37 BCE	
	Diadem/table (types 6–9) ca. 27 BCE	
	Inscription in lines/anchor flanked by palm branches (type 10); Various configured inscriptions/anchor in decorated border (type 11) ca. 26–22 BCE	Table/Two Palm Branches (type 12) Table/Palm Branch (type 13) Table/ possible vine branches (type 14) ca. 26–22 BCE
	Anchor/two cornucopias (type 15) ca. 20–13 BCE	
	Anchor/galley (type 17) ca. 12 BCE	Single Cornucopia/Eagle (type 16) ca. 12 BCE

With respect to the choices of symbols on these coins, Herod used the irregular opportunities afforded him by the minting of coins to represent events and ideas: to celebrate his military victory over Antigonus; to celebrate his role as a victor in battle; to recall his fleet's assistance to Marcus Agrippa; and to denote the enlargement of his territory through the addition of the coastal regions. In addition, Herod followed the Hasmonean precedents for minting aniconic coins and keeping the inscriptions both short and redundant (Ariel & Fontanille, 1). While Herod expanded the repertoire of images, even in his additions he kept to mainly aniconic and inoffensive images. Thus, Herod's coinage stayed within the bounds of Jewish law with respect to graven images ([Chapter 11](#)), a factor sometimes overlooked in assessments.

His coins displayed a lack of interest in mentioning new titles and acquisitions through self-congratulatory inscriptions, as later Roman emperors and some of his own successors did. The absence of dates or personal titles requires one to deduce possible meanings for the images and then assign dates based on when a proposed event occurred. Ariel and Fontanille's work on this front is an exciting advance in the field of Herodian coinage (see [Table 10.1](#)). Recent numismatic work supports the picture of Herod as a politically savvy client king, adept at avoiding the censure of either his Roman overlords or his more religious subjects; while lacking in originality, his coins creatively suggested key events in his reign.

Others outside his kingdom give a somewhat more effusive view of Herod, judging from inscriptions; if we had the statues of Herod that accompanied some inscriptions, we could reflect on how physical representations of him related to the inscriptional intent. But none survive. What can be said, however, is that numismatic and inscriptional evidence together hint at noticeable restraint in his self-representation, whether to Judeans or the wider Mediterranean world, with relatively little self-aggrandizement. Kingship was the one fixed datum in his view of himself; all his coins referred to him as king, often in abbreviated form. There is little elaboration of what that entailed, since only a few—such as the helmet and the galley—allude to Herod himself, his rights or actions or honors (Meshorer 1982, 18–19). Coins and inscriptions provide useful contemporary evidence of Herod’s rather limited representations of himself.

Economy of Herod’s kingdom

The population of Judea learned Herod’s perceptions of himself on a daily basis through his coin types, which made some aspects of his reign fairly clear, even in this limited form: better access to the Mediterranean, a more significant navy, improved trade, a decisive victory over Antigonus. Occasionally people in the Levant might see an inscription on a building, a statue, a piece of pavement, a lead weight, or a bone-box, that would have reminded them of their ruler and his family or friends in some way that signified his importance, his control of the kingdom, and his nearness to Rome. The most pervasive way his own citizens—and people in the nearby territories that also felt publicly the effects of Herod’s rule—would understand his impact was through Judea’s economy: taxes, jobs, trade, tourism, construction, roads, sewers, and water, for example. These were the relevant measures of the economy’s health and indications of the effectiveness of his ties with Rome and with his neighbors.

The kingdom’s economy raises a number of interlocking issues. How well did the economy balance income and expenditures? How did Herod’s kingdom compare in overall prosperity to other nearby areas? What were the sources of his income? Were the economic levers of the kingdom distributed fairly between classes and groups? Was his reign a time of growth and general economic prosperity for the population at large? How heavy was the tax burden? How did his very large expenditures affect the economy as a whole? Did he—as critics

suggested at the time of his death—impoverish the kingdom to give gifts externally? While we cannot answer all these questions equally well, progress has been made in the last two or three decades in understanding his economic program (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 11–20, for a well-informed overview of income and expenditures).

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Figure 10.7 The fragmentary inscription from an unknown building in Beirut mentions “Queen Berenice . . . Great King A[grippa] . . . King Herod” in lines one and two, acknowledging four generations of family involvement in the city, in this case adding or replacing “marble [statues?] and six columns.” See [Chapter 10](#), inscription # 7.

Herod had a wide range of income-generating activities. Magen Broshi, for example, notes the following sources of his income: agriculture (aided by irrigation projects), exports, transit trade (duties and tolls), the temple and pilgrimage, and the half-shekel due or tax (Broshi 1987). Rocca’s study provides a list, factoring in his assessment that taxes played “a minimal role in his annual revenues”—perhaps a small exaggeration—and that taxes were probably directed mainly at the ruling class, including priests and council members (Rocca 2008, 206, 207).

Herod’s personal wealth can be summarized thus. (1) He did not pay tribute to Rome, since his father had been granted exemption and he had inherited the same privilege (*War* 1.193–4). Fabian Udoh

emphasizes that Herod also inherited wealth both from his grandfather, while governor of Idumea, and his father; Herod used this accumulating family wealth to make friends of his neighbors, especially Arabia, and he had control over Gaza after 30 BCE, which gave him “full control over the trade routes together with the vast income that came from them” (Udoh 2014, 377 and n.63). (2) Herod had extensive royal lands of considerable economic value, including the Esdraelon Valley (which Udoh doubts), Jericho plantations, and En Gedi estates. (3) He received tribute from Obodas III of Nabatea, to whom he had lent money at interest. (4) He collected customs duties at a number of locations within his own territories, both on the coastline (e.g., Gaza, Joppa, and Caesarea Maritima) and inland adjacent to Nabatea and the Decapolis. (5) He held tax-farming contracts from Rome, especially but not exclusively in Syria; as Gabba notes, Herod could lighten taxes and provide relief only if he held the tax contract, as he is reported to have done in Balanea, Phaselis-in-Lycia, un-named towns in Cilicia, and perhaps cities in Ionia (Gabba 1990). (6) He received income from half the output of the Cyprus copper mines (for which he paid the Emperor 300 talents), while managing the other half of the output (Rocca 2008, 208–10). (7) And then there were bribes (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 14–15), as well as other possibly ill-gotten gains as a result of actions against his enemies. (8) To this list should be added the half-shekel temple tax (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 15–17; Broshi 1987), a substantial income, outside his control but available for religious purposes.

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It has been traditional to posit that Herod levied extraordinarily heavy taxes to fund his grandiose projects. For some time, there was a tendency among both Jewish and Christian scholars to see the tax burden as a veiled way for Herod to subjugate his people, as Magen Broshi comes close to saying explicitly: “There is no doubt that he oppressed his subjects and extracted heavy taxes. The direct income tax on agricultural produce reached one third or one quarter from cereals and one half from fruit, and this was only one of the taxes collected. There were also indirect taxes, direct taxes, fixed taxes, and temporary taxes (‘gifts’)” (Broshi 1987, 35, 36).



Figure 10.8 A fragmentary inscription found in excavations south of the temple mount describes a donation of pavement, probably for the temple, made by “[S?]paris Akeonos,” a resident of Rhodes. The first line refers to the High Priest and “twenty years,” which means its missing part must have referred to Herod. See [Chapter 10](#), inscription # 4.

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The claim of burdensome taxation policies under Herod has been much modified in the last quarter-century by assessments that are both more thorough and more balanced. There is a growing consensus, expressed succinctly by Samuel Rocca, that despite Josephus’s negative views on Herod’s taxation policies, “Herod’s policies were no more severe than those of his predecessors” (Rocca 2008, 204, 205; Pastor 1997, 99–110). Ariel and Fontanille agree, and put the blame for this view squarely where it belongs: “The claim that Herod’s wealth derived from brutal or excessive taxation seems to have been ideologically driven by a modern search for the social background of the First Jewish Revolt or of early Christianity” (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 11; citing Udoh 2006, 117; Udoh 2014, 1.366). They argue that “Herod’s reign was characterized by a fairly prosperous economic boom”; Herod’s “projects stimulated the economy in the short term and led to significant long-lasting effects by encouraging pilgrimage and trade” (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 11–12). We have already indicated ([Chapter 8](#)) our agreement with this conclusion, based on the increase in the number and

size of settlements and on the archaeological record. Rocca contends that “most of Herod’s revenues came from sources other than his own subjects’ taxes,” though early on while he was paying off Mark Antony and Cleopatra, tax collection was harsh. From 31 BCE onwards, financial pressure on Jewish subjects was lightened significantly (Rocca 2008, 204–5).

Sanders, too, argues effectively against notions of exaggerated tax rates (Sanders 1992, chap. 9), such as the assessments of Horsley (1987), Borg (1998), and Grant (1926), to select a few scholars of early Christianity. Sanders deals with Herod’s taxes as follows: concerning claims of a dual taxation system, he concludes that standard Roman practice took into account local conditions; concerning local religious taxes, he says they were similar to what was obtained elsewhere; concerning massive projects, he points out that Herod created new wealth and ploughed much of his own money into the economy; concerning unemployment, the figures are largely unknowable; concerning the percentage of earnings going to taxes, he estimates the effective taxation rate as a figure from something under 28 percent to about 33 percent (Sanders’ upper figure is still below Borg’s estimate of 35 percent plus customs and tolls and is much less than Horsley’s estimate of well over 40 percent). Sanders agrees that “Jews who made the full contributions to the temple and charity paid a lot in taxes and dues” (Sanders 1992, 167), and yet “the social and economic situation was not very remarkable What was peculiar in the situation was not taxation and a hard-pressed peasantry, but the Jewish combination of theology and patriotism” (Sanders 1992, 159–69).

On the general question of the bearing of Roman taxation on Judea’s total tax burden, Emilio Gabba is convincing: “The often painted picture of a kingdom tragically oppressed by the double weight of taxes due to the king and the tribute paid to Rome, is tendentious in both of its elements” (Gabba 1990, 164). Udoh emphasizes the Herodian family’s independence in matters of finances and taxation, mostly as a result of Caesar’s grant of Roman citizenship; as evidence of this independence he points to the fact that Herod gave Perea to Pheroras, that he settled 3000 Idumeans in Trachonitis, and that he settled Babylonian Jews in Batanea on land free of taxes and tribute (Udoh 2006, 327 and n.27); further, he was adaptable in tax collection, twice remitting taxes at difficult times—in 20 BCE and 14 BCE.

revenues given his heirs on his death: Philip, 100 talents; Antipas, 200 talents; Archelaus, 600 talents. Rocca estimates that Herod's annual income was larger than this total of 900 talents, somewhere between 1050 and 2000 talents, a sum equivalent to the total revenues of the various provinces of Asia Minor in the second century CE (Rocca 2008, 208; Sartre 1995). And this leaves out of the reckoning a portion of the tolls and duties from international trade that his massive projects were designed, at least in part, to attract (Ariel & Fontanille 2012, 14, citing Udoh), especially Caesarea Maritima, but also the extensive civic developments both along the coast and inland—that is, on his eastern and western borders—where there would have been substantial population growth and related economic opportunities.

Our concern is less with the details of Herod's income and expenditures than with his policies' effects on the wellbeing of his kingdom. While there was controversy over how to resolve the friction among—and the rival claims of—his successors at the end of his life (Chapter 1), it appears from the annual incomes they inherited that the economy of the kingdom was in good shape.

It would be helpful if we could verify this realistically, from the ground up. A material way to assess this is through regional archaeological surveys; for example, surveys in Galilee show increased activity and population growth during our period (Fiensy & Strange 2014; Frankel et al. 2001; Aviam and Richardson 2001), and Zissu points to “clear improvements in the economic conditions of the villages in rural Judaea” at the end of the first century BCE (Zissu 2001), and the picture is comparable in Samaritis. Surveys can be fleshed out by site excavations of specific towns and villages in different parts of the country.

One modest example with which we are familiar is Yodefat/Jotapata; expansion occurred in the late first century BCE at about the time of Herod. This took place on a lower plateau of the small town, south of the older, late-Hellenistic center on the hilltop; this evidence is at odds with usual views of what was happening on the local level in such communities (Richardson 2008). Still, we need to assess with some discrimination a town's relative economic health and prosperity at different periods before we can judge the effects of one or another leader on the economy. In a preliminary way we can say that accumulating evidence suggests the Herodian period was a period with an expansive economy. Rocca goes further: “Herod's control of the economy was felt, and brought unprecedented prosperity to Judaea, prosperity that was reflected in the development of international trade at levels never before achieved.” These improvements, he says, included agriculture, industry,

and markets, as well as international trade. “Herod developed a social program similar to that of Augustus in Rome. This program consisted of the creation of military colonies and a vast building program throughout the kingdom . . . resulting in the growth of urbanization” (Rocca 2008, 227, 239).

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Another type of evaluation would weigh the effects of Herod’s rule on the social wellbeing of the nation. We find no reason to dissent from Rocca’s view that “The Herodian state took care of the poorest elements of society, gave them paid work and, later, the possibility of owning land.” One aspect of this was employing very large numbers of persons on building projects. “Herod used much of his own private revenues for the Kingdom’s expenditures, thus lowering the level of taxation of his subjects” (Rocca 2008, 212, 375). In some respects, Herod was following the lead of the emperor in Rome; Rocca points out, for example, that Herod needed Augustus’s agreement when he imported wheat from Egypt to relieve the worst effects of a famine in 25–24 BCE; Egypt was the emperor’s private domain and its wheat would have been needed for Rome’s citizens (Rocca 2008, 211).

We note, finally, that during the Herodian period there was a large increase in the number of both devout pilgrims and casual visitors to the temple (Goodman 1999, 71; Broshi 1985, 30). On the one hand, the thrice-yearly influx of Jewish pilgrims temporarily swelled Jerusalem’s population. On the other hand, non-Jewish travelers, whether merely curious or seriously interested, came to see the cultic center of Judaism. All these, in Broshi’s view, “made a great impact on economic life in the development of trade and industry in Jerusalem and on the employment situation there and in neighbouring settlements.” The temple played an important part in the country’s economy (Broshi 1987, 35, 36).

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11 Religious and military elites

Introduction

Societies have multiple elites; while we tend to think of social and political elites as the most distinctive and influential parts of the networks of society, in Herod's Judea the two most important groupings were the religious and military upper echelons. On the one hand, as a monotheistic state it had only one set of rules and standards; mediating the practices and the norms of society was a hereditary priestly class who occupied a privileged position, being supported by those who were not a part of the Levitical priesthood. On the other hand, the Senate in Rome had given Herod his position as king, but he had had to win his way to power through military prowess, so he was beholden to and dependent upon those who worked alongside him to keep Judea strong and dominant in the region. One part of the story was his vigorous leadership—unlike his mentor, Hyrcanus II, who was viewed by some, perhaps unfairly, as weak and inadequate—shown in Herod's military victories and assured style of command at a relatively young age, which must have attracted others with military ambitions to him.

To the religious elite, Herod was an outsider; he was debarred from joining the group, so his dealings with them were inevitably at some distance. To the military elite, Herod was the ultimate insider; he was a military person by training and inclination and he had helped define the military leadership in which that elite was rooted.

Herod and the priestly elite

In 40 BCE the Roman Senate neither appreciated nor cared that the Hasmoneans, with whom they had lost patience, claimed the high priesthood of the temple cult in addition to kingship (van der Kam 2004). Since 104 BCE Hasmonean high priests had considered

themselves kings (Aristobulus was “the first to hold both offices”; *Ant.* 20.241); they had held the high priesthood since 153/152 BCE. The linkage was a key to the family’s position in the early first century BCE, though not all occupants were as bold as Alexander Janneus in using both titles on their coins; first he struck coins using his royal title (“Yehonatan the King” in Hebrew; or “King Alexander” in Greek) and then he struck coins describing himself as “Yehonatan the High Priest and the *hever* of the Jews.” Later, he overstruck “royal” coins with the “high priestly” legend. This mixing of political and religious authority may have been a latent weakness of the dynasty, but unquestionably it conferred power and prestige. After Janneus’s death in 76 BCE his widow, Alexandra Salome, assumed royal power, while her oldest son, Hyrcanus II, became high priest, with some coins identifying him as “Head of the *hever* of Jews” (a term known only from Hasmonean coins). This temporary expedient did not hold; her two oldest sons’ rivalry weakened the state and provided a pretext for Pompey’s takeover in 63 BCE.

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Josephus includes few indications of a concern over the linkage of high priest and king (*Ant.* 13.372–3). Nevertheless, deep antagonism arose within two Judean circles known for the practice of their piety: first, in the community behind the Dead Sea Scrolls, some documents, following priestly ideals, believed the linkage an offense; and second, Pharisees, according to Josephus, saw it as inappropriate (*Ant.* 13.288–92). When Herod took over as king, one of his most pressing problems was that much of the upper class supported his rival, Mattathiah Antigonus. To complicate matters, Mattathiah—who was opposed to Herod’s ally, Hyrcanus II—had been appointed king and high priest by the Parthians.

Greek has almost sixty words connoting “elite” in one way or another (Louw & Nida 1989, ad loc).¹ With respect to the priestly elite—and not all priests were elite—several factors need to be recalled. (1) The high priests were at the center of the religious elite by virtue of cultic functions, family associations, and residence in Jerusalem. During periods when Judea was not independent, the high priest, whom outsiders naturally approached as an authoritative spokesman, held effective power. (2) Other priests living in Jerusalem tended to share this elite status, for they had regular contact with the high priest and other authorities; some large and richly finished buildings excavated on Jerusalem’s Western Hill have been identified as priests’ houses and demonstrate well this elite status. Priests who lived away from Jerusalem

had little influence because they needed to be in the city only two weeks in the year. (3) For more than a century the Hasmonean family had been at the center of the religious elite. The honor ascribed to them gave the family unique status; even during Alexandra's rule, when high priesthood and kingship were separated, political and religious power resided in the one family. (4) While the Judean ruling class was larger than one family or even one group, during the Hasmonean period wealth, power, and status tended to flow toward the family's friends and supporters, many of whom were priests.

Josephus does not trace Herod's relations with the elite in detail: though not well documented, it seems Herod executed some, took others' property, undercut the previous power structures, and obliterated the vestiges of allegiance to the Hasmonean family. It is less clear to what extent he created a new ruling elite, though it is likely—and was politically necessary—that he did so, elevating primarily members of his extended family (see [Chapter 12](#)), transferring land ownership, and shifting wealth and power. The councils or courts he occasionally convened when he felt he needed support imply a wider social and religious elite. We can reasonably conclude that a transformation of the upper layers of society was underway.



Figure 11.1 The lower portion of Phasaël's (possibly Hippius's) Tower—one of three towers at the western entrance to Jerusalem—was left standing after Judea's revolt and Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE to underscore Rome's might, according to Josephus. The bold, rough, central bosses of the masonry

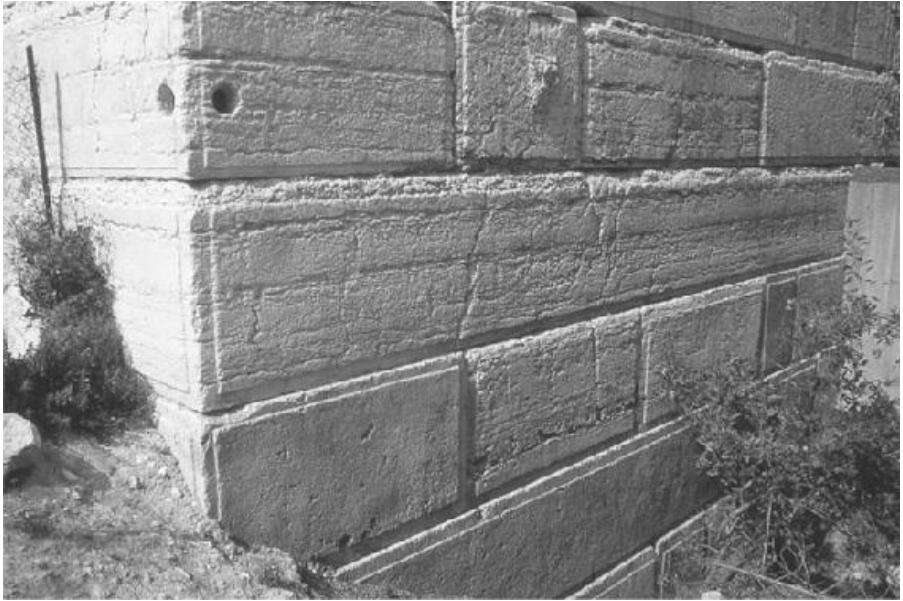


Figure 11.2 By contrast with military walls, the southwest corner of the temple mount displays the more elegant masonry used even in the foundations of the reconstructed temple in Jerusalem, with recessed borders, smooth bosses, and enormous stones; each course of masonry is set a centimeter or two inside the stone below to enhance the wall visually and structurally.

Priests were essential for the temple cult to function, indeed for many aspects of society as a whole to function (Sanders 1992, chaps. 6, 10). A high priest was one element in the proper scheme of things; the Hasmonians (1 Macc. 2:1) had altered traditions about the high priest, both with respect to heredity and function. For one thing, Hasmonians were not themselves from the family of Zadok, for another, no one had previously linked king and high priest in one person. As the Jewish community at Leontopolis in Egypt demonstrated, some Jews disliked the break with tradition in the matter of high priest. When Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria deposed the legitimate Zadokite high priest in Jerusalem in 174 BCE, Onias III or Onias IV founded another temple with a sacrificial cult in Egypt to maintain old high priestly traditions. Essenes, who also felt the break in tradition, took a different tack,

simply abandoning Jerusalem to await a legitimate priesthood and temple to reappear in the messianic age. Possibly Sadducees also rejected the new order of things, since their name incorporates the revered name of Zadok.

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In Herod's first brief experiment following his victory over Mattathiah Antigonus, he appointed Hananel, a Babylonian, as high priest (Neusner 1976, 50–2). Josephus says Hananel was from an undistinguished priestly family (*Ant.* 15.22), though he also says a few pages later he was from “a high priestly family” (*Ant.* 15.40–1) and a “valued friend” of Herod (15.40). Hananel may have returned to Judea when Hyrcanus returned; presumably Hyrcanus participated in the appointment. Herod subsequently deposed Hananel, an act that Josephus says was unlawful and had only happened twice before—when Antiochus IV Epiphanes replaced Jason with Menelaus, and when Aristobulus II removed his brother Hyrcanus II to appoint himself. Herod's action in deposing Hananel and appointing Aristobulus III as high priest was partly to satisfy his wife Mariamme and partly to confer Hasmonean legitimacy on his fledgling reign (*Ant.* 15.31–41; 20.247–48), for Aristobulus was the son of Alexander and Alexandra (both Hasmoneans) and brother of Herod's wife, Mariamme I (another Hasmonean). The appointment backfired on Herod by being too successful; Aristobulus became a focus of Hasmonean aspirations, as a result of which, according to Josephus, Herod had him drowned in a pool in the Hasmonean palace at Jericho (*Ant.* 15.50–6; 20.248).

Josephus emphasizes a traditional view of the high priest (*Ant.* 20.224–51): that he must be “of Aaron's blood and that no one of another lineage, *even if he happened to be a king*, should attain to the high priesthood” (*Ant.* 20.226, our italics), possibly hinting that Hasmonean high priests were doubtfully legitimate. Josephus goes on to say that Herod “abandoned the practice of appointing those of Hasmonean lineage as high priests” (20.247, 249), calling it merely a “practice.” So far as is known, there were no male descendants who could have followed in the Hasmonean line after the drowning of Aristobulus III at Jericho. Josephus provides sufficient information that a list of Herodian high priests can be drawn:

Hananel (37–36/35 BCE) deposed;

Aristobulus III (35), drowned;

Hananel again (35–30), deposed;

Jesus son of Phiabi (30–24), deposed;

Boethos (24–5), deposed;

Simon son of Boethos (5);

Matthias son of Theophilus (5–4), deposed;

[Joseph son of Ellemos (for one day in 4; not Herod's appointee);]

Joazar son of Boethos (4).

With respect to permanence of office, the overall picture is shoddy, though there was a thirty-year period (35–5 BCE) with only three high priests. Several appointments flowed from Herod's personal considerations: Aristobulus III was Herod's wife's brother; Boethos was Herod's future father-in-law; Joazar was Mariamme II's brother. These, like Archelaus's two appointments after Herod's death, were attempts to connect Herod's family with traditional authority. Others such as Hananel and Jesus son of Phiabi were not so linked. Joseph son of Ellemos was a one-day replacement necessitated by Matthias's semen impurity.

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Hananel from Babylon may have been of high priestly descent, if preference is given to *Ant.* 15.40–1 over 15.22 and 20.247. Among the large Babylonian Jewish community there would have been many priests, of whom some would have been from high priestly families. The coincidence of Hyrcanus II's return from Babylon and Hananel's appointment implies an attempt to draw the Babylonian Jewish community more closely to Judea. Given Rome's conflict with Parthia, Herod's appointment of a Babylonian makes good sense (Rocca 2009, 284, on the strategy). On our chronology the end of Hananel's second term coincided with the death of Hyrcanus II, whose friend and "client" he may have been.

It is sometimes claimed that all high priests were brought up in Jerusalem and trained for the job, but that is unlikely. For example, the questions surrounding Jesus son of Phiabi may be resolved by an Egyptian origin. Apart from texts in Josephus, *Mishnah*, and *Tosephta*, his name appears only in the cemetery at Leontopolis (Tell el-Yehudiyeh) in the Delta region in Egypt. A list of high priests who prepared the ashes of the Red Heifer refers to Hanamel (sic) as an Egyptian, followed immediately by "Ishmael son of Piabi" (*m. Parah* 3.5). Has this text transposed the epithet "Egyptian" from Phiabi, where it belongs, to

Hananel, where it does not? An Ishmael, appointed high priest by Valerius Gratus (*Ant.* 18.34), may be a descendant of this Phiabi. Another Ishmael b. Phiabi, referred to in *m. Sota* 9.15 (“When R. Ishmael b. Phiabi died the splendour of the priesthood ceased”), was appointed high priest in 59 CE. These references attest to this family’s status in proto-Rabbinic traditions.

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Figure 11.3 Herod’s Jerusalem palace was demolished in 70 CE, but excavations have disclosed the vaulted substructures in the area inside the Jaffa Gate known as the Citadel. Similar vaults were characteristic of a number of contemporary Herodian—and other—structures, such as the Temple of Roma and Augustus at Caesarea Maritima. Presumably these carried the palace’s buildings and courtyards.

Perhaps Herod’s appointee was from Leontopolis (on the site, *Ant.* 13.62–7). Why might Herod be attracted to such an appointment? (1) Just as Herod attempted to draw the Babylonian Diaspora more closely to Judea, he may have wanted to connect the large Egyptian community to Judea. (The fact that the next high priest was Boethos, an Egyptian from Alexandria, may support this view, though Boethos’s appointment was motivated primarily by Herod’s forthcoming marriage.) (2) In 30 BCE Herod shifted his allegiance to Octavian from Antony and

Cleopatra; we don't know the date of Phiabi's appointment, but if it was early in the year Herod's future at that point still lay with Antony in Egypt. (3) Leontopolis was the site of the temple built by Onias III or IV, which may have been modeled on the temple in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 13.67) and had high priests going back a century and a half to the last of the Zadokite line to function in Jerusalem, viewed by some as the legitimate line. Though nothing links Phiabi with Onias III and a hypothesis that Herod may have sought a more "legitimate" high priest would be speculative, the connection between Phiabi and Egypt and Zadokites from Leontopolis is suggestive (Runesson, Binder, & Olsson 2008, 282–5; Kasher 1985, 119–35; Stern 1982).

Herod began the reconstruction of the Temple in the late 20s BCE; assuming a preliminary period for negotiations with authorities, training workers (*m. Eduyoth* 8.6), gathering materials, and so on, planning for the project may have been initiated while Jesus son of Phiabi was high priest (30–24 BCE) and construction certainly had begun when Boethos was high priest (24–5 BCE). Both were Egyptians, and one may have been associated with the Temple at Leontopolis (Bammel 1979). It is tempting to suppose that Jesus ben Phiabi brought his experience at Leontopolis to the planning of the Jerusalem temple project.

We offer a conjecture (Richardson 2004, chapter 16). Herod's reconstruction increased the complexity of the sequence of increasingly holy courtyards: Gentiles, women, Israel, priests, the sanctuary, the holy of holies.² The Hasmonean temple, like the temple of Zerubabel and the first temple, had some of these gradations (outer court, holy place, and holy of holies). A court of Gentiles and a court of women were innovations of Herod's structure, yet they were accepted, for example in the *Mishnah*, with little suggestion of controversy. The nineteenth-century excavators of Leontopolis claimed to have discovered a slightly more formal series of spaces than existed in the Hasmonean structure, though there are reasons to question their proposed two-part sanctuary (as at Jerusalem) with two more sequential and architecturally independent courtyards. Re-examination of the data has resulted in skepticism about the earlier claims. Even so, evidence of an extra court is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (in 11 QT, "Temple Scroll").

There are, however, slight hints of opposition to an amplified courtyard system. One source (1 Macc. 9:54–7) says Alcimus, high priest and "leader" of the renegade and godless, began to tear down the "wall (*teichos*) of the inner sanctuary," which some think means that he

intended to remove the barrier between Gentiles and the Holy Place (Schürer 1973–87, 1.175, n.6; Rappaport 1992, 1.145; Lanzinger 2015). A later text (*m. Middoth* 2.3) says the destruction made thirteen breaches in the barrier (*soreg*).

Two other mishnaic traditions presuppose limited controversies. A question about which judicial court was competent to try which cases prompted the following opinion: “they may not add to the city or the courts of the temple save by the decision of the court of one and seventy” (*m. Sanhedrin* 1.5). Was adding to the courtyards a major issue resolved only by a formal decision? A variant opinion states,

It is all one whether a man enters into the temple court or into any space that has been added to the temple court, since they may not add to the [holy] city or to the courts of the temple save by the decision of a king, a prophet, Urim and Thummim and a sanhedrin of one and twenty [judges].

(*m. Shebuoth* 2.2)

While both texts refer to *additions* to the space of the temple courts—not to changes in the *number* of courts—they imply that Herod’s alterations had approval of a legally constituted court or mix of authorities, and that debate was needed for such changes (Ritmeyer & Ritmeyer 1989).

The Temple Scroll, usually dated to the second half of the second century BCE, describes the ideal temple in the messianic period as having *three* courtyards, the outer one being an enormous space of 1,600 cubits (almost half a mile) square for “daughters” and “strangers” (i.e. women and proselytes; 11QT 36–40). Around the holy place is a narrow “rampart” with twelve steps up to it, beyond which only “the children of Israel shall ascend to enter my sanctuary,” an arrangement similar to the court of the gentiles in the Herodian temple, but with a major difference: the separation between Israelite and non-Israelite is outside the temple precincts, not inside (Schiffmann 1992; Wise 1990).

To summarize, the first temple (and Ezekiel’s vision) had an inner court (the sanctuary and its adjacent areas) and an outer court. In the second century BCE a tradition developed, visible in 11 QT, of a more complex structure with three “courtyards,” the outer of which was for women and proselytes. During this same period a rival temple was built at Leontopolis, which may have expanded the number of courtyards, though we cannot say how. Later, the *Mishnah* recalls two debates about extension of the courts, and the resolution of those debates in favor of an essential integrity with the temple proper. Further, both Josephus and the *Mishnah* describe the Herodian temple’s complex courtyard

arrangement. There was a growing alternative tradition (a “sectarian” view?) that favored a more complex series of courtyards. Two concrete results—a court of Gentiles and a women’s court—emerged from this developing tradition and influenced Herod’s form of the temple. The women’s court was the more striking innovation, yet the *Mishnah* accepts it without comment.

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The social significance of these developments is important. A court of gentiles developed at a time when large numbers of interested outsiders throughout the Diaspora joined Jews and proselytes in worship in Jerusalem. It was also a time when the *pax romana* allowed international travel on a broad scale, when the Empire’s economy was healthy, when increasingly large numbers of visitors might be expected. And a court of women brought women to a point where they could participate in the temple cult, though only partially and in a limited way. Josephus says, “This court was thrown open for worship to all Jewish women alike, whether natives of the country or visitors from abroad” (*War* 5.199). It was not full inclusion in temple worship, but it was a step in the revaluation of women (Richardson 2004, 292–7).

Josephus’s account of Herod and the temple

Josephus reaches a highpoint describing Herod’s rebuilding of the temple (*Ant.* 15.388–425; *War* 5.184–23). When we are told about Herod’s speech describing his motives (*Ant.* 15.380–7), we cannot trust the details of Josephus’s report; yet some of the speech’s elements cohere with circumstances at this point in Herod’s reign, correspond with the point of the undertaking, and run counter to Josephus’s sometimes negative evaluation of Herod in *Antiquities*. It is contrary to Josephus’s purpose to present Herod in such favorable terms, so he may be relying upon a source, Nicolas of Damascus, or even Herod’s own *Memoirs*. Sanders, who prefers the account in *War*, is critical of the complementary account in *Antiquities* and skeptical of Josephus having access to other sources (Sanders 1992, 59–60). In our view, however, Herod’s motives may, as he says, have included a concern for posterity’s view of him, improvement in Judea’s international image, and expressions of his Jewish piety. *Antiquities* may be correct, as well, to claim the finances for the temple’s reconstruction derived from funds under Herod’s control, a combination of personal and state money available because Judea was relatively prosperous and secure ([Chapter](#)

Herod was acting as patron not of one region or interest group but as benefactor of all Jews everywhere. The temple project was deeply symbolic, nothing less than the re-imaging of the cult center of the main monotheistic religion of the period, not unlike Augustus's re-imaging of Rome (Zanker 1990, *passim*). The grandeur of Herod's design was not incidental, for it altered the image of Jews in the Roman world. The temple's innovations, its size, the speed with which the project was carried out—even its implied competition with other precincts—all were more than a minor bringing up to date of an old place of worship. The temple enhanced Jews' self-image in Judea, the Diaspora, and Rome. At the same time Herod also improved his own reputation.

The reconstruction program was very successful. Apart from limited discussions about the courts, noted above, the only major dispute of its built form we hear of centered on the eagle ([Chapters 1 and 10](#)), and that came only after completion; in fact, references to Herod much later in rabbinic literature suggest a surprisingly favorable reaction to this project:

He who has not seen the Temple in its full construction has never seen a glorious building in his life. Which Temple?—Abaye, or it might be said, R. Hisda, replied, The reference is to the building of Herod. Of what did he build it?—Rabbah replied, Of yellow and white marble. ... He intended at first to overlay it with gold, but the Rabbis told him, leave it alone for it is more beautiful as it is, since it has the appearance of the waves of the sea.

(*Gemara, Sukkah* 51b)

Likewise we find [withholding rain] happened in the days of Herod when the people were occupied with the rebuilding of the Temple. [At that time] rain fell during the night but in the morning the wind blew and the clouds dispersed and the sun shone so that the people were able to go out to their work, and then they knew that they were engaged in a sacred work.

(*b. Ta'anith* 23a; see *Ant.* 15.245)

But how could Baba b. Buta have advised Herod to pull down the Temple ... [followed by a lengthy derogatory discussion of Herod]. ... Now tell me [*scil.* Herod] what amends can I make. [Baba b. Buta] replied: As you have extinguished the light of the world [the Rabbis] ... go now and attend to the light of the world [the Temple, of which] it is written, *And all the nations have become enlightened by it.* ... Herod replied, I am afraid of the government [of Rome]. He said: Send an envoy, and let him take a year on the way and stay in Rome a year and take a year coming back, and in the meantime you can pull down the Temple and rebuild it.

These approving though late comments on the temple point toward several aspects of Herod's reconstruction. (1) It was reported to have had the approval of the authorities, including a named contemporary, Baba b. Buta. (2) Rome was lukewarm, and it was only b. Buta's clever advice—according to Josephus Herod's close friendship with Rome (*Ant.* 15.387)—that made rebuilding possible. (3) The *naos* took three years to build. (4) There was a process of discussion and debate, with rabbis in full agreement. These points suggest the rebuilding required lengthy negotiations, both inside and outside the country. Its construction could have created massive dissent in Judea if it were widely perceived to be against Torah or impious in any way; and it could have angered Rome, either because Herod was too independent or because the temple focused dissent within Judaism. The project avoided both internal unhappiness and external opposition, becoming the grandest religious structure in the Roman world, even while Herod redefined the arrangements for Israel's temple cult. The balancing act was a perceptive piece of religious diplomacy.



Figure 11.4 Originally part of a defensive line of Hasmonean forts, Hyrcania was turned by Herod into a combination fortress-palace (and sometimes a prison). Like other Hasmonean desert palaces, it is on a high peak with a water supply for the palace (above) and the double pool (middle) below carried by a high-level aqueduct (right). The Dead Sea is in the background.

The temple was an eclectic building design, not entirely “indigenous.” To be sure, it had many Judean elements, but it also drew on neighboring influences from Nabatea, Palmyra, Egypt, the Hellenistic world, and Rome. Its blend of influences mirrored the blend in Herod’s own background (Richardson 2004, 277–81). It would be misleading to minimize continuity between Herod’s rebuilt temple and earlier versions, whether the second temple or the first temple, but it would be equally incorrect to overlook major innovations in the rebuilding, some of which were architectural embellishments that enhanced its appearance or function but did not bear directly on religious issues.

We noted above the change in the number and arrangement of courtyards and the two major changes that bore on the practice of Judaism, in both cases bringing an excluded group closer to the sanctuary and its central activities. The motivation seems to have been religious inclusion, and the re-design of the structures gave dramatic effect to those social and religious changes.

Herod and groups or parties

Herod’s closest religious contacts were with representatives of the cult in Jerusalem, as he rebuilt the sanctuary and appointed—and deposed—high priests. At the same time, Herod must have been interested in other religious groups, and they would have been keen observers of his doings. Investigation of these matters, however, is seriously limited by imbalances in the sources. Party perceptions of Herod are largely non-existent, and the few we have are, of course, skewed. Josephus is obviously interested in the various groups, yet the one extensive contemporary library, the Dead Sea Scrolls, largely ignores Herod, while other religious traditions either fail to preserve their early literature (Pharisees, Sadducees), or never wrote much (zealots, Herodians, baptists, sicarii).

Brigands

In his primary account of “three schools” (*War* 2.119–66), Josephus includes descriptions of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, set in the narrative at the point when Augustus deposed Archelaus, appointed Coponius as procurator, and when Judas the Galilean started a tax revolt, all in the year 6 CE (*War* 2.117–18). Judas’s group, lying outside the recognized three, had “nothing in common with the others.” According to *War*, Judea’s troubles devolved entirely on the revolutionaries, so Josephus was careful to ensure Judas and his actions

did not contaminate the three respectable groups. The ancient sources are quite widespread (among others, Cassius Dio, 5.28, 75.2; Pliny, *Letters*, 6.25; *CIL* 8.2495; 3.8242; Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.18–20; 16.2.37).

Josephus did not intend his readers to think of “brigands” in *War* and *Antiquities* as a formal group—perhaps correctly, a point on which there has been much discussion (Hobsbawm 1985; Horsley & Hanson 1985; Isaac 1984, 171–203; Crossan 1991, chap. 9; Richardson & Edwards 2004). Several incidents are crucial to understanding Herod. (1) His successful actions against Hezekiah (a “brigand chief”) and his followers on the Syrian frontier brought peace to Galilee and Herod to the attention of Sextus Caesar; in Judea, however, Herod was taken before a Jerusalem court (*War* 1.204–11; *Ant.* 15.158–67; *War* 2.56). (2) Herod rid the caves of Arbela overlooking the Sea of Galilee of bandits and their families (*War* 1.309–13; *Ant.* 14.420–30; [Figure 3.1](#)). (3) In a closely related action against some who fled to marshes and fortresses (probably Keren Naftali; see [Figure 8.8](#)) near Lake Huleh, Herod fined towns that had supported brigands (*War* 1.314–16; *Ant.* 14.431–3). (4) He dealt with a “revolt” of Galileans who had drowned nobles and “partisans of Herod” in the Sea of Galilee (*War* 1.326; *Ant.* 14.450). (5) Herod had to quell general disturbances (*War* 1.364). (6) He brought peace and security to Trachonitis and Abila by taking action against Zenodorus, who himself was not a brigand but used brigands to pillage Damascenes and increase his income (*War* 1.398–400; *Ant.* 15.344–8; *War* 2.215; *Treatise of Shem* 7:18ff.). (7) He settled Zamaris and 500 Babylonian Jews in Batanea to bring security to Trachonitis, creating a tax-free buffer zone (*Ant.* 17.23–9).

These disparate accounts cohere in viewing Herod’s problems as “social brigandage” at the beginning of his reign, in the unsettled days of the 40s and 30s BCE. The brigands had families, close connections with towns, and religious or upper-class support. The descriptions are mainly of uprooted peasants who maintained connections with neighbors and social superiors, those who suffered social dislocation from economic changes and consequent hardship. The dispossessed survived by preying on those who had more, maybe the same persons who had taken the little they had.

Herod was not the cause of the social problems, but it is no surprise that he sided with Judean upper-class needs and Roman political aims. Rome had long had problems with social radicals—on land and sea, in the provinces and in Italy, in east and in west. As a young man Herod

had firmly joined the effort to rid the Empire of pirates and brigands—a goal endorsed by Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Mark Antony. In so doing, Herod conflicted with Jewish authorities, though when they tried him on a capital charge for executing Hezekiah, their motives were mixed; they were likely more upset by his threat to the elite’s levers of power than by his exceeding his mandate.

Their geographical locations are illuminating: the Syrian frontier, Huleh marshes, Trachonitis, and Abila were relatively inaccessible areas in the northern parts of Herod’s districts where it was easy to hide, yet close to towns. The exceptions to this pattern were the Arbela caves (in a good agricultural area, overlooking a major north–south road), near the Sea of Galilee, around the Sea of Galilee where “Herod’s people” were drowned, and at Sepphoris (*War* 2.56) where, after Herod’s death, Hezekiah’s son Judas raided the royal arsenal. The locations suggest collusion between townsfolk and brigands and support the theory of social concerns behind their actions.

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Prior to later expansionism and prosperity in Herod’s reign, social activism turned some to “brigandage,” as Josephus calls it. This soft underbelly of Herod’s rule occurred especially, but not exclusively, in Galilee, where those driven to harassing of the upper classes and merchants sometimes had the tacit support of their neighbors. Herod tried to eliminate this social unrest but—despite Josephus’s assurances to the contrary—not altogether successfully (point 7, above, was late in his career).

Sadducees

Sadducees were at the opposite end of the social scale from brigands during Herod’s reign (Sanders 1992, chap. 15). When Josephus describes the three “schools,” about 6 CE, he implies Sadducees had been around for a long time, preceding Herod. Josephus’s earliest reference occurs at the time of Jonathan Maccabeus (160–143 BCE; *Ant.* 13.171–2), an account involving a Sadducee named Jonathan inflaming problems between Hyrcanus I and Pharisees (especially one Eleazar), which induced Hyrcanus to join the Sadducees and punish anyone observing Pharisaic regulations (*Ant.* 13.288–96).

In Josephus’s view, Sadducees accepted only written regulations (*nomima to gegrammena*); those handed down orally by the “fathers”

need not be observed (13.297). They had the confidence of the wealthy alone, with no following among the populace (13.298). In his main account (18.16–18) Josephus repeats these claims: they held to nothing but the laws, were disputatious (*War* 2.166, “boorish”), and accomplished nothing when in office because they had to follow Pharisaic opinions (see b. *Yoma* 19; b. *Niddah* 33b; Wassen 1991; Saldarini 1988; LeMoyné 1972; Lauterbach 1951, 23–48).

Since Josephus knows the Sadducees well, it is surprising he never refers directly to them in his accounts of Herod’s life; his narrative ignores them for a century between the death of Hyrcanus 1 in 104 BCE and the deposing of Archelaus in 6 CE. Should we then say nothing about Herod and the Sadducees, or are they present in other ways? One line of argument has been to say that high priestly families are all Sadducean, especially the House of Boethos because Boethusians equals Sadducees; so, in considering Herod and the Sadducees, all we need do is analyze Herod and the high priests (Stern 1974; per contra Porton 1992). This approach, however, imports rabbinic views and later social notions into a reading of Josephus. A more promising approach examines matters of class and status, important to Josephus with his emphasis on their standing and wealth, as Goodman, for example, claims (Goodman 1987, 79):

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Sadducaism was adopted by those who did not need [the comfort of belief in the bodily resurrection, angels and spirits]. Against the whole ethos of the Old Testament ... the Sadducees maintained that God exercised no influence at all on human actions and that a man could choose for himself whether to do good or evil, being entirely responsible for his own fortune or misfortune. ... Such ideas in other societies have seemed attractive to political rebels who, rejecting the notion that their poor social position was divinely ordained, used their own efforts to seek change; in Roman Palestine, by contrast, Sadducaism embodied a smug self-congratulation about the status quo that only the rich could accept.

He points in the right direction. It is not that Sadducees were not religious but that this was not their most distinctive feature in Herod’s day; rather than focus on a supposed association between Sadducees and high priests, as Sanders tends to do (Sanders 1992, 317–40), we should investigate social status and outlook, whether of religious leaders or lay leaders (contrast Sanders 1992, 329–31). A careful analysis of high-status terms such as “wealthy, powerful, and high-born” used by Josephus is still a requisite.

Not only is Josephus inconsistent in his use of terms; conditions were

not static. Under Herod, Sadducees were replaced by other elites, in part because Herod eliminated some members of the ruling elite at the time he took power. By bringing in high priests from elsewhere (Babylon, Leontopolis, Alexandria) he contributed to a growing disaffiliation of priests from Sadducees. The group faded out of sight during his reign, as Josephus's silence suggests, to be replaced by members of his family, by a military elite, and by a ruling group around Herod that held the levers of power (Lightstone 1975; Porton 1992).

Pharisees

Josephus refers first to Pharisees in *Antiquities* in the Maccabean context just discussed (*Ant.* 13.171–2), while his main account in *War* occurs in 6 CE (*War* 2.119, 162–4). He includes several accounts of Pharisaic activity in the Maccabean period to fill out his picture. His earliest account is historically situated in the dispute mentioned above (*Ant.* 13.288–98) between Jonathan (a Sadducee) and Eleazar (a Pharisee), when Hyrcanus I deserted the Pharisees, abrogated the regulations (oral Torah), and lost his popular support because Pharisees had the support of the masses. Eleazar, who “liked dissension” (*Ant.* 13.288), argued with Hyrcanus over an important matter of principle: should the throne and the high priesthood be combined? Sadducees were on Hyrcanus's side of the debate, associating Sadducees and the ruling power. A generation later, Queen Alexandra, widow of Alexander Janneus, yielded power to the Pharisees at Janneus's suggestion (*War* 1.107–14; *Ant.* 13.401–29); her strict observance coincided with similarly strict Pharisees. They assumed “royal authority” and executed Diogenes, a friend of Janneus's (*Ant.* 13.410) and one of the few named Sadducees in the sources. Later, the powerful (*dynatoi*), some of whom were Sadducees, came with Aristobulus to the palace in a barefaced attempt to help Aristobulus seize power because they feared Pharisees (13.423).

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After Herod cleared out Hezekiah's “brigands” (47 BCE) he was brought before a court, as discussed above. Josephus says that Samaias (or Pollion) berated the court for its timidity (Schalit 1969, 768–71); without attacking Herod directly Samaias predicted that Herod would punish them and the king (*Ant.* 14.172–4), anticipating that eventually Herod would rule. As a result, Herod respected Samaias (14.175–6), so when Herod later took Jerusalem, he honored his supporters, especially Pollion and Samaias, a Pharisee and his disciple, because they had urged the city to admit Herod. The pair appears a third time when they and

their followers were excused from taking an oath of support of Herod (*Ant.* 15.368–70). In what seems a duplicate account of the same event set much later (*Ant.* 17.41–5), the oath was to Augustus and Herod together; when 6,000 Pharisees refused to take the oath, Herod’s brother’s wife, the unnamed sister of Mariamme I, paid the fine. Pharisees, says Josephus, ruled the women of the court (*Ant.* 17.41), especially Pheroras’s wife; they predicted that Herod would fall and the throne would pass to Pheroras and his wife (*Ant.* 17.43), which led to Herod executing a court eunuch and household members “who approved of what the Pharisee [singular] said” (on Pheroras, Kokkinos 1998, 164–75; Baumgarten 1991, 119–20). Later still, in the “eagle affair” (*War* 1. 648), Judas and Matthias, two men learned (*sophistai*) in traditions of the fathers and probably Pharisees, were executed with some of their followers for tearing down a golden eagle from the temple gate ([Chapter 1](#)).

Such a brief review provides mixed data. (1) There were few shared values between Herod and the Pharisees; neither made many concessions to the other. Rocca exaggerates when he says Herod had “many interests in common with the mainstream Pharisee group” (Rocca 2009, 259); it is more likely, as Sanders argues, that Pharisees were initially well disposed to Herod (1992, 391, and all of chap. 18). On one side were Alexander Janneus, Aristobulus II, Antigonus, and the “eminent”; on the other, Pharisees, Alexandra, Hrycanus II, and Herod’s family. (2) Herod had grudging respect for Pollion and Samaias, but (3) Herod was contemptuous of Matthias and Judas, whom he executed along with their closest followers. (4) Pharisees refused an oath of allegiance, as did Essenes. (5) Pheroras’s wife and other women in the royal court supported Pharisees, who predicted Herod’s fall; these Pharisees also were executed. The last three incidents came late (6–4 BCE) and may imply fear of Pharisaic power as Herod’s control slipped; Pharisees were now willing to confront Herod by dabbling in court affairs. As Baumgarten points out, the evidence argues strongly against Neusner’s view that the Pharisees changed from a political group to a table fellowship during the Herodian period. Rather, “the Pharisees *as a group* must have been working against Herod” (Baumgarten 1991, 120). Nevertheless, in the middle of his reign, direct confrontation was avoided.

Alon proposes six reasons for Pharisaic opposition to Herod: (1) he was unfit because he was not Jewish; (2) he suppressed the Sanhedrin; (3) he appointed and deposed high priests; (4) he introduced Greek

civilization; (5) he evicted Jews, as at Caesarea, and replaced them with non-Jews; (6) he failed to be independent of Romans (Alon 1961). Most of these are exaggerated, none is compelling, and yet there are elements of truth to several. As Sanders claims, alluding to Nicolas, “Herod’s true supporters distrusted the Pharisees and watched them carefully” (Sanders 1992, 393).

Essenes

For reasons he never spells out, the Essenes fascinate Josephus. In both long accounts of the “schools” (*War* 2.119–66; *Ant.* 18.11–25) he devotes more space to them than to others, in *War* forty-two of forty-seven paragraphs; he also names more Essenes than Pharisees or Sadducees,³ and his tone is more approving of them than of either Sadducees or Pharisees. Essenes had the greatest piety and sanctity, and—unlike Pharisees and Sadducees—were not hostile to others. Despite living a withdrawn communal life (Philo, *Quad Omnis* 76), they also lived in villages and cities (for example, *War* 2.124 claims they were spread through every city, and an Essene gate on the western hill in Jerusalem implies an Essene quarter there). A partial explanation may be that Josephus’s own views conformed more closely to those of Bannus—whose ascetic life had some elements in common with the Essenes—with whom Josephus spent three years (Mason 1991, 342–6; see also Sanders 1992, 532–3, n.9).

Following the death of Hyrcanus 1 (104 BCE), says Josephus, Judas the Essene—who was active in the temple—prophesied Aristobulus’s assassination of his brother Antigonus (*War* 1.78–80; *Ant.* 13.311–13). Essenes’ political stance is noted in *War* 2.139–40: the Essene “is made to swear tremendous oaths . . . that he will forever keep faith with all men, especially with the powers that be, since no ruler attains his office save by the will of God.” Josephus does not say whether this refers to secular or religious authority, though it seems likelier to refer to secular rulers. Its ambiguity can be seen in 2.140, which refers to “all people” while 2.141 refers to members of the group. The primary allusion is probably to the state; Essenes’ community life, non-involvement in national religious activities, and notion of “divine right” of rulers brought relative quiet during Herod’s reign.

In about 20 BCE Herod required an oath of loyalty (*Ant.* 15.368–70; cf. *Ant.* 17.42–3). He excused not only Pollion and Samaias and their disciples but also the Essenes; Josephus thinks this affected a limited number of Pharisees, but *all* Essenes, for “Herod [held] the Essenes in honour and [had] a higher opinion of them than was consistent with

their merely human nature” (*Ant.* 15.372). Josephus then introduces the virtuous prophet Manaemus (15.373–9), who had once addressed the schoolboy Herod as “king of the Jews,” explaining he would rule happily, “for you have been found worthy of this by God.” He instructed Herod to love justice and piety, but he predicted he would not, so God’s wrath would be shown at the end (15.376). Herod summoned Manaemus in the late 20s BCE to ask about his rule’s length, to which he gave an evasive reply, about twenty or thirty years; “from this time on he [Herod] continued to hold all Essenes in honor” (15.378). Herod’s generous response was not paralleled by a similarly generous treatment of other groups. It is impossible to say if Josephus thinks there was a connection between his account of Manaemus and the description of Herod’s rebuilding of the temple that follows immediately (15.380–425); the timing and the references to Herod’s piety may account for the sequence, though we noted above a tantalizing similarity between Herod’s courtyard arrangements and 11QT (cf. Eisenman 1986, 89).

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The Dead Sea Scrolls provide fewer insights than might be expected. (1) There are no unmistakable references to Herod or his children, despite the fact that several scrolls are late first century BCE or early first century CE. (2) The Scrolls’ hostility centers instead on Hasmoneans opposed to the community and its Teacher of Righteousness, who departed from the way they should have walked:

Behold, an accursed man, a man of Satan, has risen to become a fowler’s net to his people And [his brother] arose [and ruled], both being instruments of violence. They have rebuilt [Jerusalem and have set up] a wall and towers to make of it a stronghold of ungodliness.

(4 Q175, “A Messianic Anthology”)

(3) Invective shifts to Romans (*Kittim*) in some Scrolls, especially the *War Scroll*, which anticipates a thirty-three-year war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness:

And [the Kittim] shall gather in their riches, together with all their booty, *like the fish of the sea*. And as for that which he said, *Therefore they sacrifice to their net and burn incense to their seine*: Interpreted, this means that they sacrifice to their standards and worship their weapons of war.

(1 QpHab, col. 6; “Commentary on Habakkuk”)

(4) Although the scrolls often presuppose that the temple was defiled,

there is little antagonism related to the cultic buildings.

There may have been two Essene views (Sanders 1992, 362–3, 376–7), with Qumran’s view more sectarian and exclusivist (cf. 1 QS 9.4–5; 1QSa 1.3; “Community Rule”). Still, it could have served Essene purposes to contrast the temple of the end-times with Herod’s rebuilding in the present. This contrast does not occur (not even in 5 Q15, “New Jerusalem”), although we find: “[the unclean shall] never [enter, nor the uncircumcised,] nor the Ammonite, nor the Moabite, nor the half-breed, nor the foreigner, nor the stranger” (4Q174, “Florilegium”; cf. 11 QT’s inclusions). Participants, not structures, matter.

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The community’s interest in the Hasmonean period contrasts with a lack of interest in Herod and his period. On the other hand, Philo’s description may allude in one or the other half to Herod:

Many are the potentates who at various occasions have raised themselves to power over the country. ... Some carried their zest for outdoing wild beasts in ferocity to the point of savagery. They left no form of cruelty untried. They slaughtered their subjects wholesale, or like cooks carved them piecemeal and limb by limb whilst still alive ... till justice who surveys human affairs visited them with the same calamities. Others transformed this wild frenzy into another kind of viciousness. ... They fawned like venomous hounds yet wrought evils irremediable and left behind them in the cities the unforgettable sufferings of their victims as monuments of their impiety and inhumanity. Yet none of these ... [laid] a charge against this congregation of Essenes.

(*Quad Omnis* 89–91)

This slender evidence corresponds to Josephus’s positive reports on Herod’s relationship with Essenes; we may note that the original excavators of Qumran held that the buildings were deserted from the earthquake of 31 BCE until the early first century CE (Milik 1959, 52–4, 93–4; Schürer 1973–87, 2.587; but see Magness 2003, 47–72), more or less coinciding with Herod’s main period of activity. At the very least we can say there was no *increased* tendency to withdraw as a result of Herod.

Herodians

A few minor New Testament allusions to “Herodians” (Matt. 22:16; Mark 3:6; 12:13) have prompted several interpretations of the word in its historical and literary context (Braun 1989, 71–84). There are three

main possibilities: (1) “Herodians” had a late origin, imported into the New Testament because the group was relevant at the time of writing (hence the name derived from Agrippa II); (2) the term “Herodians” emerged during the lifetime of Jesus, reflecting a setting in the life of Antipas or Agrippa I; (3) “Herodians” as a term was anchored in Herod’s lifetime.

Contrary to Braun’s conclusions, three factors favor the latter view. First, several phrases in Josephus suggest a contemporaneous Herod-party of supporters (Rowley 1940, 14–27): *hērōdeioi* is a good Greek form equivalent to “Herodians” (*hērōdianoι* is a Latinization), as is *tous ta hērōdou phronountes* (*Ant.* 14.450; cf. *War* 1.326; 1.319; *Ant.* 14.436; *Ant.* 15.1; *War* 1.358). Second, it is not easy—though not impossible—to understand why a Herodian party should be associated with Antipas (who ruled Galilee only), and little easier to see why there might be one associated with Agrippa I. Third, it seems implausible to posit a group of “Herodians” developing after 55 or 60 CE associated with Agrippa II, which was then read into earlier Gospel traditions after the Great Revolt of 66–74 CE.

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A historical group coalescing around Herod himself is more plausible. The group’s convictions would have been straightforward: Judea needed a king; here was a family with power and prestige and enjoying Rome’s confidence; expectations of a “messianic” king were pie in the sky; Herod offered stability and a reasonable accommodation with Rome. What is more, if Augustus were to hand over more territory to Herod, as had been rumored, it would create a greater kingdom than David’s and Solomon’s, with all the corresponding opportunities. Besides, Herod was owed gratitude for his building of the temple and strengthening of Jerusalem, not to mention the improved economy.

It is likely that the primary referent in *hērōdeioi* and *hērōdianoι* was King Herod and only secondarily later family members. “Herodians” owed their standing and their continued positions of influence to Herod’s intimate connections with the imperial family ([Chapter 13](#)). The numbers may not have been large, and it probably was not a formal group, but the participants’ external interests coincided with Rome’s and their internal interests merged neatly with the Herodian family’s.

Conclusion

The connections between Herod and various religious groups were undoubtedly more important and more complicated than we can now recover confidently, though we can posit that the group with which he had the most cordial relationship—after Herodians—was Essenes. Other contrary views were held more strongly: one author (who may speak for a group) says in Moses' name and from a hostile perspective:

And a wanton king, who will not be of a priestly family, will follow them. He will be a man rash and perverse, and he will judge them as they deserve. He will shatter their leaders with the sword, and he will (exterminate them) in secret places so that no one will know where their bodies are. He will kill both old and young, showing mercy to none. Then fear of him will be heaped upon them in their land, and for thirty-four years he will impose judgments upon them as did the Egyptians, and he will punish them. And he will beget heirs who will reign after him for shorter periods of time. After his death there will come into their land a powerful king of the west who will subdue them, and he will take away captives and a part of their temple he will burn with fire. He will crucify some of them around their city.

(*Testament of Moses* 6:2–9)

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The rhetoric and language are not unlike some of the DSS, and this could reflect a related group. The subject is certainly Herod and his family: a non-priestly king who executed leaders, who ruled thirty-four years (calculated from 37 BCE) and who had heirs who followed him. The “powerful king from the west” was Quintilius Varus, governor of Africa (8–7 BCE) and of Syria (ca 7/6–4 BCE), who suppressed revolts following Herod's death (and in 9 CE lost three legions to Arminius in Germany). During “Varus's War,” as rabbinic literature calls it, some portions of the temple were burnt (*War* 2.49), some people deported, and some crucified. *Testament of Moses'* description is more social and political than religious; the author says the victims were judged “as they deserve.” It reflects attitudes in a period soon after the events themselves, sometime between 4 BCE and 30 CE (Sanders 1992, 455–7); since Herod's successors “will reign” for shorter periods than he, the author is writing prior to 30 CE, when Antipas's and Philip's reigns exceeded thirty-four years.

The religious views of this “rash and perverse” king himself are not mentioned anywhere; they can only be inferred from minor indications. It is obvious, on the one hand, that Herod never abandoned the Judaism that his grandfather had embraced two generations earlier. He remained a Jew, perhaps even a faithful Jew, his whole life, insisting, for example, that outsiders be circumcised before marrying into his family. His efforts in rebuilding the temple point to a primary attachment to temple

worship, as contrasted with a lack of interest in synagogues. His apparent preference for Essenes and Pharisees suggests an interest in a kind of “pietistic” approach to religious life (reflected in attitudes of some family members), with Sadducees’ formalism of less interest. Archaeological evidence adds two details to the picture. Positively, his palaces included Jewish ritual bathing pools (*mikvaoth*) in the private bath facilities intended for family use, underscoring a concern for observance of purity rules. Negatively, with some exceptions ([Chapter 9](#)), his palaces contained few figurative representations—whether animal or human, whether two-dimensional or three-dimensional—to offend the religiously conservative. He did not always and everywhere avoid such representations; Herodium has now given evidence of human figures in frescoes, and statue bases elsewhere show he was not averse to being portrayed in areas where it would not offend. Also suggestive is Augustus’s comment about preferring to be Herod’s pig than his son, which implies that Herod himself followed laws of *kashrut*, perhaps even when he was in Rome. Such bits of inferential evidence give a partial picture of a third-generation Jew, concerned to support and enhance the religious convictions to which his grandfather converted.

On the other hand, Herod had an accommodatory stance to non-Jewish deities. His views were neither exclusionary nor rigorous. Of primary importance are his three temples to Roma and Augustus, his vigorous support of imperial religion and veneration of his patron. He paid attention to Nabatean gods—the religion of his mother—at Si’a in Auranitis, and to Idumean places of worship—the religion of his paternal ancestors—at both Hebron and Mamre. In a broader context, he built or rebuilt temples in Phoenicia, Berytus, and Rhodes. Other benefactions in Greece and the Hellenistic world may have had religious connotations. Herod felt no contradiction in supporting diverse cults, Jewish, Greek, Roman, Idumean, and Nabatean. His view seems to have been broadly inclusivist.

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Herod’s army and navy: a military elite

With the religious elite, Herod’s main question was the different religious goals of the various groups; he could not control them, and had to resort to negotiating and manipulating. With the military the question was not so much his attitudes and relationships but his use of forces that, under Rome’s implicit direction and with Rome’s tacit approval, Herod had cobbled together. “Herod was the commander-in-

chief” (Rocca 2009, 134), the final decision-maker barring only Augustus. We begin with his personnel and then the infrastructure.

Army

Though not strictly speaking part of the army, Herod had a personal bodyguard, following in Augustus’s footsteps, who had developed the Praetorian Guard early in his rule (Bingham 2013, 9–21). His bodyguard comprised Galatians (probably from Gaul rather than Galatia; Rocca 2009, 145 n.51), Germans, and Thracians. The 400 Gauls/Galatians had been a gift from Augustus to Herod after the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra (*Ant.* 15.217). Since the numbers of Germans and Thracians were likely about the same as the number of Gauls, the total strength was about 1,500 to 2,000. The only time we hear of the bodyguard playing a prominent role was at Herod’s funeral procession from Jericho to Herodium (*Ant.* 17.198; *War* 1.672).

The army was a mixed bag drawn from various groups within the kingdom: Jewish, Greek, Iturean, and Nabatean mercenaries can all be traced (Shatzman 1991; Pitassi 2009). Rocca puts a better construction on it than most in his claim that “Herod’s army was an instrument of cohesion in the kingdom. In his army Jews and Gentile [sic] served side by side” (Rocca 2009, 195, 134). This may well be true, though it is likely that opportunities for military and social advancement were open mainly to Romans and Judeans. According to Rocca the army was smaller than during the Hasmonean period, and significantly smaller than Seleucid and Ptolemaic armies. Herod’s army initially numbered 3,000 to 5,000; by the siege of Jerusalem about 10,000 to 12,000; during the Nabatean war about 15,000 to 20,000; and in his final years perhaps about 18,000, including the substantial numbers settled in military colonies (Rocca 2009, 137–40).

Superior officers “were either members of Herod’s family or came from Roman Italy”; that is to say, Italian mercenaries (Rocca 2009, 141). Among the former were Joseph (Herod’s brother), Achiab (his cousin), and Costobar (his brother-in-law); among the latter were Gratus, Rufus, and Volumnius. The strong Roman emphasis in the army’s leadership alongside Herodian family members ensured the army reflected the pattern of Roman units, which would have meant the army had skills similar to those in the Roman army: to conduct siege warfare, build and guard camps for short stays, construct and use artillery equipment. There were junior commanders (called *hēgemōnes* and *stratēgoi*), while the army also had *stratopedarchēs*, the equivalent of the Roman “prefect of the camp” or *praefectus castrorum* (Shatzman

1991, 208; Rocca 2009, 142). The parallelism with the organization and leadership of Rome's army made for smooth coordination of the units when they worked together.

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Most of Herod's army was infantry, with cavalry units estimated at about one-fifth the strength of the infantry. The only unit of cavalry known in the sources is 500 Babylonian horse, led by Zamaris and settled in Batanea (Shatzman 1991, 175–80; Rocca 2009, 145–7); Rocca thinks it probable Herod had mounted Iturean archers as well as the Batanean archers, to go along with his Iturean light infantry archers (*Ant.* 14.452). There may also have been an Idumean light infantry unit, while the clearest case of heavy infantry was the 3,000-strong *sebastēnoi*.

Herod's army was mainly associated with Augustus's aims in land-based military engagements. The prototype of this role was Antipater's assistance to Gabinius in Egypt in 55 BCE, which had led to Antipater and his family receiving Roman citizenship other perquisites that greased his family's climb to prestige and power. Similarly, Herod assisted Julius Caesar at Apamea in 45 BCE, Mark Antony at Samosata in 38 BCE, and Octavian's Egyptian campaign in 30 BCE. A more controversial enterprise was his assistance with 500 men, apparently from his bodyguard, in Aelius Gallus's expedition to Arabia Felix in 25/24 BCE (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.4.22–4; *Ant.* 15.317).

In these actions Herod's main role was assistance, providing men or supplies for larger Roman army units. In a few cases he was a prime actor, in some with Rome assisting him, and in others alone. For example, Rome assisted Herod in a major fashion when he was struggling to take the kingdom 39–37/36 BCE with a small, relatively inexperienced army. During his first Nabatean conflict Herod fought alongside Antony's (and Cleopatra's?) troops (32–31 BCE). In the pacification of Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis in 24/23 BCE, he acted alone. And in his second Nabatean war in 9 BCE Herod was on his own, a fact sufficient to cause Augustus to call into question Herod's grip on reality.

Herod's army (and fledgling navy) should be viewed primarily as auxiliary units to the Roman army. Most of the time their role was in explicit accord with Roman aims, fighting beside Roman troops. Sometimes, however, they went into action without a larger Roman army and Roman leadership, generally with the tacit approval of Rome's

military leader in the region. Occasionally, however, he and his army acted without such approval, as in 9 BCE against Nabatea. When his actions showed too much independence, Augustus reined him in sharply and quickly. His army was not a completely self-standing army, and certainly was not independent of Rome's aims and objectives.

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Navy

Less can be said with certainty about Herod's navy, created in addition to his army but, it seems, separate from it (Starr 1960, 1989; Rocca 2009, 190–5; Pitassi 2009). During some of the Hasmonean period Judea may have had a navy. On the cusp between Hasmoneans and Herod there is a suggestive bit of evidence: Cassius and Murcus gave ships, cavalry, and infantry to Herod at the time he was made governor of Coele Syria (42 BCE). The ships were presumably to serve on the Sea of Galilee (*Ant.* 14.280). Whether an early experience of a small fleet's usefulness—even on such a small body of water—prompted his later foray into a larger fleet cannot be known, but seems likely. Another contribution to forming a navy may have been his friendship with Marcus Agrippa. Agrippa had a strong interest in ships and improved technology to equip them to do their jobs: Agrippa was involved with including fighting towers on Roman naval ships, and devising the *harpax*, a grappling hook fired by catapult to enable Roman ships to come to grips with the enemy.

One of Herod's coins reflects his pride in the development of a naval force ([Chapter 10](#)); we are convinced the coin type that portrays a galley was occasioned by his naval fleet, though many think otherwise. Whatever one thinks about the coin, Herod had a navy that undertook at least one main international action in support of Rome: assisting in Marcus Agrippa's Black Sea expedition in 14 BCE, aimed at putting down a threat in the Cimmerian Bosphorus. As Rocca and others point out, Augustus's main naval strength was split between bases at Misenum and Ravenna, to control the seas on both sides of Italy. Rome had no fleet farther east, so Herod's actions through the Aegean Sea and into the Black Sea were significant and appreciated. We hear little of naval units from other allied kings at any period of naval history.

Ten years earlier (25/24 BCE), Herod had been part of the disastrous Arabian Gulf expedition under Aelius Gallus. It is unclear whether he contributed to the naval capabilities of the expedition, and it seems

unlikely he was personally present. The expedition's naval aspects were less important than the army's role, since much of the travel was on land and the engagements almost entirely land-based. Still, Aelius Gallus needed 130 troop transports to carry the total of 10,000 soldiers (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.4.2ff). It is possible but unlikely that Herod contributed to the navy on that occasion. He had as yet no decent harbor and he lacked the direct encouragement of Marcus Agrippa—with Agrippa's naval experience—that he had later. Nevertheless, the expedition shows how Judea cooperated with Rome in a variety of ways.

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Perhaps the Red Sea expedition and its failures brought home to Herod the strategic significance of having an effective naval force to assist Rome, as needed, in actions that could only be conducted on sea. Once Marcus Agrippa was in control of the eastern empire he may have suggested there were mutual benefits if Herod were to develop a navy. A role for Herod in a Black Sea expedition would have become apparent to Agrippa as he was making his plans for the Bosporan action, before and during his extensive visit to Syria and Judea, when one of the major featured attractions was Caesarea Maritima and its large harbor.

Sebastos, Caesarea's harbor, was crucial to Herod's plans for a navy. While a major function was as a port for maritime trade, demonstrated by its battery of warehouses on moles and on piers, another major function was to house his fleet, which not incidentally demonstrated Herod's attachment to the Emperor. The commander of the fleet was likely the *stratēgos* of Caesarea Maritima (Rocca 2009, 194).

Rocca argues that the navy had another role, revenue control (Rocca 2009, 194), functioning in the nature of a coastguard—as we might say today—protecting from sea-based attacks and smuggling. As we have noted, a small naval contingent on the Sea of Galilee served much the same role (*Ant.* 14.280) from 43 BCE onwards, and there was probably another small naval force on the Dead Sea, following the earlier pattern of the Hasmoneans and later continued by Legio X Fretensis.

With few exceptions, Herod's military activities, like those of his father Antipater, were undertaken in concert with Rome, as they must have been if one were to be a reliable dependent king, avoiding suspicions about being overly ambitious and independent. Herod's army and navy both were part and parcel of Rome's needs and intentions, not indicative of some Herodian expansionist goals.

Some studies conclude that Herod was so disliked by the Judean people that his various fortresses should be viewed as defenses against society's hostility, with his army an essential means of control: Herod

was compelled to base his rule on force. This was directed mainly against his own subjects. ... The army was thus Herod's main means of maintaining his power. ... Because of the distrust and hostility felt toward him by his subjects, Herod had to hold them down harshly and ruthlessly.

(Gracey 1992)

This overstates the situation for two main reasons. First, Hasmoneans had established the locations of most of the significant fortresses and Herod was fitting into a settled pattern; locations established by Herod were selected primarily for external considerations. Hasmonean precursors included Alexandreion, Cypros, Docus, Threx, Hyrcania, Macherus, possibly Agrippina, Keren Naftali, and Adora; Herodian fortresses included Herodium West, Herodium East, Esbus, Masada, and perhaps Bathyra's and Batanea's settlements, the latter all on the kingdom's edges. Second, archaeological excavations of the Hasmonean period fortresses show that Herod renovated and rebuilt many of them, but when he did he was motivated in part by a desire for personal comfort and pleasure more than for internal protection (Cypros, Alexandreion, Masada, among others; [Chapter 9](#)). In general Rocca agrees with this understanding (Rocca 2009, 155, 157, 196) and argues that, whereas it has been customary to portray the Judean people as invariably opposed to Herod, in fact if Herod had not had the support of his Jewish subjects Rome would not have appointed him (Rocca 2009, 21).

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External relations with neighbors such as Nabatea, Egypt, and Parthia had long troubled Judea. Sites in Perea—especially Macherus—had obvious military usefulness in the context of strained Judean–Nabatean relations, as did Hasmonean-origin fortresses in Judea such as Hyrcania, Docus, and Alexandreion, which had been defending the border at that earlier period. Herod's military colonies were also prompted by external concerns: Rocca (2008, 139 n.26) lists Batanea (600 men of Zamaris), Trachonitis (about 3,000 Idumeans), Heshbon (unknown number of cavalry), Gabae (about 1,000 persons), Samaria (about 6,000 men at Pente Komai), and Idumea (about 2,000 Idumeans). These military settlements totaled about 13,000 to 15,000 men, of whom 11,000 were

in Samaria, Idumea, and Trachonitis; none were in Judea or Perea proper (Heshbon was added in 31 BCE to Herod's territory), and only one small one was in Galilee. With the other exception of Samaria—which can be accounted for as a case of good available agricultural land for veterans on the Roman centuriation model—military settlements, like Hasmonean fortresses, played primarily outward-looking rather than internal roles.

Shatzman draws different conclusions from an extensive analysis. He identifies four kinds of fortresses—road-forts, city-fortresses, palace-fortresses, and country forts (Shatzman 1991, 267)—divided into two groups, “those which were meant to establish control over cities, regions and traffic on the roads” and “those which were constructed to serve as refuge centres in case the central command might collapse” (Shatzman 1991, 275). While he allows that they might all have acted as bulwarks against an invading army, he believes this was a theoretical contingency, not their *raison d'être* (276). That rationale he interprets as mainly internal dissent. We beg to differ on his main point, using two arguments from the archaeological record.

First, as noted above, Herod added to and altered earlier Hasmonean fortresses, whose locations were set by Hasmonean priorities and needs. Their rebuilding would naturally include restoring the defensive capabilities of the fortresses—especially those near the Nabatean border—but even in these cases the major building activity involved additions to enhance creature comfort, and in a number of cases these parts of the additions and renovations lay outside the actual fortifications themselves, as was the case on the lower level at Alexandreion, where a new courtyard was constructed, and at Cypros. Masada and Macherus and Hyrcania were special cases because of their proximity to Nabatea, but in each instance there was close attention to their comfort and facilities. In the cases of Macherus and Hyrcania, the royal facilities were integrated into the fortress itself, while in the case of Masada, the royal apartments were both inside the fortification walls (the Western Palace) or just outside those walls (the Northern Palace).

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Second, in the catalogue of Herod's building activities no newly built—or for that matter renovated—military structures were built in Galilee, an area where internal trouble might have been expected. There was a military colony at Gabae, about which very little can be said with precision. It was a colony, not a fortress, *per se*. The more interesting case is the fortress at Keren Naftali, first occupied in the late-Hellenistic

period as a Tyrian outpost overlooking the Huleh Valley, and then taken over by the Hasmoneans, to judge from the extensive evidence of Jewish life, including a very large *mikveh*. From the Herodian period there is evidence of Herod's use of Roman siege techniques in his actions against "bandits," but no evidence of occupation of the fortress during his reign (Aviam 2004, 59–88; summary, Richardson 2004, 23). Nor is there other evidence of fortresses throughout Galilee that might be interpreted as part of a network of structures designed to quell internal threats. This negative evidence works strongly against the view of Shatzman and others.

Uncertainty also attaches to a southern line of forts or fortlets that is sometimes taken more or less for granted to have been protecting Judea from Idumeans and/or Nabateans (Shatzman 1991, 246; Rocca 2009, 177–81). In the absence of extensive archaeological work, little can be said with certainty. Strongpoints such as Macherus and Masada, and perhaps Esbus (Heshbon; Hisban), were important in the period's geopolitics and represent key positions in what may be interpreted as an external defensive line. But evidence for Herodian work is quite thin (Eshel/Richardson forthcoming). There was a Jewish settlement at Aroer, with a square fort, first built during the rule of Agrippa I; at nearby Tell Malhata (Malatha) in the Arad Valley there was settlement in the Hellenistic period, with no conclusion about ethnicity, and in the next stratum that included a fort a strong defensive wall being dated to the third and fourth centuries CE.

Applebaum (1989, 134–5) refers to "several Hellenistic forts along the Beersheba line": Tel Saba, Tel Arad, Hirbet 'Uzzah, to which he adds others such as Hatzevah. He says that archaeological research has established the existence of Herodian forts at Zohar, Aroer, 'Uzzah, Tel Arad, Sheruhan (Tel el-Farah), and a fortlet at 'Ein Tamar, but not all of these are securely Herodian even if all were forts. He goes on to refer to nine fortlets, of which four form a line, which he thinks of as a *limes palaestinae* frontier, prior to the Roman period. Positing a *limes* that even in the later Roman period may not really have existed seems a case of over-interpretation.



Figure 11.5 When Herod took Alexandreion (Sartaba) he added a peristyle courtyard on a lower plateau with heart-shaped corner columns. The peristyle was designed to look east across the Jordan to Perea, the Decapolis cities Scythopolis (to the north), Pella (northeast), Gadara and Gerasa (east), and Philadelphia (southeast). Beyond all those was Nabatea.

Somewhat the same situation obtained in Iturea. There were settlements in Bathyra and Batanea, the role of one, perhaps both, being mainly to assure Babylonian pilgrims of safety and security on their way to and from Jerusalem. There were, however, virtually no fortifications of the kind one would expect if the ruler felt a pressing need for defense, and in fact the relatively peaceful and prosperous reign of Philip that followed Herod's reign suggests little pressure in that period and no holdover of tension from Herod's period. It is true that during Herod's reign there was trouble with some of the Decapolis cities that experienced major changes in their fortunes and their independence, and one might have expected competing fortifications to stymie aggression from Hippos, Gadara, Gerasa, Scythopolis, and the others. Other than Alexandreion, the Hasmonean fort, and possibly Agrippina, there are none.



Figure 11.6 East of the Dead Sea atop a prominent hill, Macherus underscores clearly Hasmonean and Herodian defensive postures toward Nabatea; it was part of a signal system joining Masada, Hyrcania, Cypros, Docus, and Alexandreion, with Jerusalem. Herod's rebuilding of Macherus included a peristyle courtyard, bath, syphon-system aqueduct (the stone foundations going uphill), and small town.

Conclusion

This brief survey of the religious and military elites in Judea has emphasized the essential differences in Herod's dealings with powerful groups, in the one case being in charge and using the military to further Rome's—and of course Judea's—goals, in the other using a softer approach to navigate his way through the religious minefield. At no point, however, did he set the one power structure against the other; he did not use the army to cow one or another of the religious parties into submission, even when they might have been thought to pose a problem for him. He may have intimidated Judea in other ways to get his way, but the military was not thought by near contemporary observers to be an instrument of oppression. If he held society in check, he did it by other means.

This leads to a second observation, consistent with that point. The personnel, military equipment, and fortifications were intended mainly

for external defense, not, as is often argued, for protection from internal enemies. The strong emphasis among many earlier studies of Herod's Judea was the claim that his fortresses, among his wide-ranging building activities, were evidence of his need to suppress the Judean population, and that his army was the instrument to do this. This is questionable. On the one hand, Herod's army, navy, and military infrastructure were directed more toward service to Rome and for dealing with external threats. On the other hand, while acknowledging Herod's authoritarianism and brutal suppression of opponents and challengers, the obvious point to make is that he can hardly be distinguished from others in the same period. Augustus's record with rivals is only a little better than Herod's.

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It is tempting to make a third point that differentiates Herod and Augustus. As the Pontifex Maximus, Augustus stood at the apex of state religion, and when the worship of Roma and Augustus took flight after 27 bce, the role of the Emperor was magnified in visible ways (Zanker 1990, *passim*). Under some of the Hasmoneans—those who were both king and high priest—a slightly similar situation had developed, where both religious and civil power was held in one pair of hands. That same situation did not arise under Herod, and there is no evidence that he made any effort to move things in that direction. He did, it is correct to say, use the appointment and removal of high priests for his own purposes, but he appears to have kept a respectful distance from the office of high priest itself, except for the drowning of Aristobulus III.

Notes

- 1 Louw and Nida list fifty-seven words marking either status distinctions in general or high status. Note such words as *dynatos* ("powerful"), *megalos* ("great"), *eugenēs* ("well-born"), *topos* ("position"), *klēsis* ("station" or "calling"), *bathros* ("standing"), as well as various words denoting "honor," such as *timē*, *kleos*, *dokimos*, *entrepomai*, and so on.
- 2 In *m. Kelim* 1.6 there are ten degrees of holiness: Israel, walled cities, Jerusalem, Temple Mount, rampart, court of women, court of Israelites, court of priests, between the altar and the porch, sanctuary, and holy of holies.
- 3 Essenes: Judas (*War* 1.78), Simon (2.113), Manaemus (*Ant.* 15.373), later John (*War* 2.567); Pharisees: Eleazar (*Ant.* 13.288), Pollion and Samaia (15.1–4, cf. 14.172–6), and possibly Judas and Matthias (*War* 1.648); Sadducees: Jonathan (*Ant.* 13.171), possibly Diogenes (*War* 1.113).

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12 Family matters

Herod's wills

We are in the fortunate position of being able to identify the convoluted series of Herod's wills that reflected changing circumstances among his family members. The wills illustrate his sequential attempts to deal satisfactorily with the succession, so it should be no surprise that the pace of changes increased as Herod neared the end. There is, perhaps, no comparable figure from antiquity whose last wishes can be tracked with the same precision over such a lengthy period (in general, see Braund 1983, 16–57; Kosmetatou 2012). Seven wills show the problems he faced from an embarrassment of often disappointing male children.

On Herod's death, Augustus dealt with Herod's seventh and last will; at the time Augustus had problems similar to Herod's in determining the succession, as Julius Caesar had had before him when he named his great-nephew Octavian his heir, requesting that he adopt the name Caesar (Suetonius *Aug.* 7). Augustus had made Gaius and Lucius his heirs by adopting the two children of his daughter Julia and Marcus Agrippa as his sons (Goldsworthy 2014, 322–4; Jones 1934, [chapter 5](#) and 151); at about the same time Herod had included Alexander and Aristobulus in his first will in 17 BCE. As events within the Seleucid, Armenian, Parthian, and Judean kingdoms—to name a few in the region—had shown, nothing fractured a state as easily as dynastic quarrels (Sullivan 1990, *passim*); Augustus tried to arrange marriages of his grandchildren that would help draw his family together.

Herod's succession problems, however, took on a different cast from Augustus's. There was a flurry of events in 39–38 BCE: Octavian, as he was at that stage, fell in love with Livia; he divorced Scribonia, who soon bore their daughter Julia (39 BCE); Livia and Octavian married (38 BCE); and Livia bore her second son Drusus (Goldsworthy 2014, 160–4). In quick order Octavian had acquired a daughter by his first wife and

two stepsons by his second wife: Tiberius (b. 42 BCE, d. 37 CE) and Drusus (b. 38 BCE, d. 9 BCE). Julia married Marcellus, Octavian's nephew (son of his sister Octavia), in 25 BCE, but Marcellus died two years later. Julia then married Marcus Agrippa (21 BCE), Octavian's closest friend and most trusted lieutenant, at Octavian's insistence and despite Marcus Agrippa's reluctance. The union provided Augustus with three male heirs, Gaius (b. 20 BCE, d. 4 CE), Lucius (b. 17 BCE, d. 2 CE), and Agrippa Postumus (b. 12 BCE, d. 14 CE). After Marcus Agrippa's death in 12 BCE, Julia married Tiberius (11 BCE) in a last-ditch attempt to secure the succession for close family members (Goldsworthy 2014, 361–2, 378–80, 426–33). There have been rumors from antiquity to today, probably ill-founded, that Livia was responsible for the deaths of some or all of Gaius, Lucius, and Augustus, as she tried to ensure the Imperial throne for her son Tiberius (Goldsworthy 2014, 429).

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Judean succession issues, though smaller than Rome's concerns, were made more complex and intractable by the fact that Herod had multiple wives and children with markedly different backgrounds. Josephus claims that Herod's wives were chosen for their beauty, not their family. More to the point, he says polygamy was permitted (see pp. 383–5) and the king gladly took advantage of this possibility (*War* 1.477; contrast Rocca 2008, 76–7). Unlike Octavian who had no direct heirs, Herod was troubled by too many heirs and with questions about them: which potential heir had the fewest disabilities, was most suited, had the most support, was most acceptable to Judea and to Rome. His children ranged from some with royal blood to others with no “Jewish” blood at all. The result was a succession of wills to meet changing conditions; the following summary agrees with Hoehner's conclusions with the exception of our will five (Hoehner 1972, 269–76).

Will one (23/22 BCE)

Although there is no documentary evidence of this first will, when Herod was given the right to name his successor in 23/22 BCE (for 22, see Hoehner 1972, 269) it seems likely that he made a will immediately. If so, the first will must have named Alexander heir, possibly with Aristobulus included in a provisional way, though Josephus focuses entirely on Alexander (*War* 1.454, 456, 458; *Ant.* 15.343, 16.92, 95, 129, 133). The will confirmed what must have been a condition of his marriage to Mariamme I: the putting away from the royal court of Doris and her son Antipater. It may seem surprising that seven years after

Mariamme's execution and with other marriages intervening Herod still honored the undertaking with Mariamme, but it is not inexplicable, for two reasons: (1) Alexander and Aristobulus were Herod's two oldest sons, with the exception of Antipater, who had been sidelined; (2) they were partially Hasmonean, so they offered Herod the advantages that caused him to be attracted to Mariamme in the first place: legitimacy and some hope of popular support. The children were about nineteen and eighteen years of age, able to succeed should the need arise; no doubt this more than anything else triggered discussions with Augustus over Herod's right to name a successor. With Antipater—now about twenty-six—still hovering on the scene, it was important to settle the succession with Augustus's approval.

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Will two (14/13 BCE)

Because Alexander and Aristobulus had become antagonistic to him, Herod reversed field and restored Doris to favor; he brought her back to the royal court (14 BCE; *War* 1.449–51; *Ant.* 16.81–6) along with her son Antipater, whose restoration signified that he should succeed to the throne, excluding the other two brothers (*War* 1.151; *Ant.* 16.86). *War* and *Antiquities* agree that Antipater, who must have felt that reestablishing Doris's position would secure his position as successor, engineered Doris's return to Herod. When Antipater traveled to Rome—presumably his first trip to the capital—to take Herod's will to Augustus, his new position was immensely strengthened by his appearance in full regalia as a “friend of Caesar” (*Ant.* 16.86).

Will three (12 BCE)

Herod's third will one or two years later followed Herod's reconciliation—at Augustus's insistence—with Mariamme's two sons, and Augustus's confirmation of Herod's right to name his own successor (or successors)—an indication of his confidence in Herod (*Ant.* 16.127–9; *War* 1.454; Hoehner 1972, 271, n.4). Augustus may have leaned toward Alexander and Aristobulus as Herod's heirs because Archelaus of Cappadocia was the father-in-law of one of them, or perhaps simply because he knew them from their time in Rome. Nevertheless, Augustus gave Herod the right to name more than one successor should he wish, “whichever of the sons, or even to apportion it” (*Ant.* 15.342, 16.129, 133). In the third will Herod named Antipater king, with Alexander and Aristobulus

as “subordinate kings,” in Josephus’s telling. He publicly announced in Jerusalem the arrangements for sharing royal power, warning against turning the royal successors against their father in his few remaining years (*War* 1.457–66; *Ant.* 16.132–5), a warning that meant Herod was declining in vigor—he was over sixty—and wished to give up rule altogether. It is obvious, however, that this will’s provisions were unworkable, potentially disastrous, given the relations among the three sons. It attempted to balance the claims of rival family branches, and showed that even at this period, eight or so years before his death, Herod thought it best to trifurcate the kingdom, because each should have a share of the “honor” (*Ant.* 16.129). It is ironic, and a sign of the family’s volatility and infighting, that none of the three beneficiaries under this will succeeded in the kingdom’s eventual trifurcation.

Will four (7 BCE)

After Alexander and Aristobulus were tried and executed (7 BCE) because their behavior had become intolerable—or when Antipater’s Machiavellian schemes succeeded—a new will named Antipater Herod’s heir. There was a twist: Herod Philip I (son of Mariamme II) was named Antipater’s designated successor (*Ant.* 17.53; *War* 1.573; Hoehner 1972, 272–4), although at about fifteen he was barely old enough to assume rule if that were necessary. This subordinate provision passed over an older son, Archelaus, son of Malthace (he was about sixteen, his younger brother Antipas was about fourteen). The reasoning behind this no doubt was that Malthace’s children were half-Samaritan, while Philip was grandson of the current high priest, Simon the son of Boethos, and thus more acceptable to the population at large.

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Will five (6 BCE)

We consider this will separate from will four; it was necessitated by Herod’s decision that Mariamme II was complicit in a “plot” against him, and the repercussions of her complicity fell on her whole family. He divorced Mariamme II, removed her son from the current will, and removed her father from his position as high priest (Hoehner 1972, 273, nn.1, 2). In this codicil, as we might say, to Herod’s will Antipater continued to be Herod’s heir, but Mariamme’s son Philip was no longer named Antipater’s successor (*War* 1.599–600; *Ant.* 17.78).

Will six (5/4 BCE)

In his most interesting will Herod returned to his original practice and Augustus's preferred model, naming one person his successor. Antipater had been discredited—he had been tried and found guilty—and Herod had divorced Mariamme II, so he was required to fall back on the children of Malthace (*War* 1.646; *Ant.* 17.146–7). According to Josephus Herod hated Archelaus and Philip II, because Antipater had poisoned Herod's view of them as rivals to his ambition to succeed; it is possible, however, that Herod was reluctant to name Archelaus heir because of Archelaus's deficiencies, as borne out by later events. The sole remaining possibility for a successor was Antipas, at this time sixteen or seventeen years of age and becoming a possibility as a successor at this late point in Herod's life. New provisions included bequests to his patrons Augustus and Livia, their children and friends and freedmen, to his own sons, and to Salome. Though similar provisions may have been included in previous wills, both *War* and *Antiquities* record them for the first time in will six.

Will seven (4 BCE)

Within a few months the effects of Antipater's campaign against Archelaus and Philip had worn off; Antipater himself had been executed and Herod had returned to his earlier practice of balancing rival claimants by naming Archelaus king (now about nineteen years old), his full brother Antipas (about seventeen), and his half-brother Philip II (about sixteen) as tetrarchs (*War* 1.664; *Ant.* 17.188–90). In this will Herod bequeathed three cities to Salome and made generous bequests to the Emperor and to Livia, and others as well. Although we have presented each will-drafting occasion as a new will, regardless of overlaps with the previous one, it is possible to think of will seven (Hoehner's will six) as a codicil to will five (and our will five as a codicil to will four). Antipas was a clear loser in this final will, since he was demoted from being sole successor as stipulated in the previous will. It is somewhat surprising that the sources report no resentment over his demotion until much later when, according to Josephus, Antipas's wife urged him to seek the title of king.

Herod's intentions

When Augustus considered Herod's final will after Herod's death, he was presented with three glaringly different possibilities: (1) incorporate Judea into the Roman provincial system by attaching it to Syria; (2) give the whole of Herod's kingdom to one strong king; (3) accept Herod's will and split the kingdom. Consistent with his earlier decision to permit Herod to name his own successor(s), Augustus chose to accept a slightly modified version of will seven (see [Chapter 1](#)), at the same time accepting Herod's bequests to Salome, Herod's sister, almost as if she were a fourth main beneficiary (*Ant.* 17.189, not in *War*). The main constraints in Augustus's decision were the following.

First, Herod's various attempts to secure a stable succession had less to do with who was best suited to succeed than with which wife and sons were in or out of favor (on succession in Judaism, Falk 1974, 504–34, especially 518–21). Josephus's details are not as full as we might wish, but it is certain that with a total of ten wives and an embarrassment of male children as potential successors, the rivalry for precedence within the palace walls was intense.

Second, together with the poisoned palace atmosphere that afflicted immediate family relationships, there were alliances beyond the palace walls that could have created a firm base for succession. Josephus provides some evidence that this was so, especially in the cases of the three oldest, Alexander and Aristobulus on the one hand and Antipater on the other. The likeliest potential heirs actively courted external support within the family's kinship connections and among the broader patronage connections outside the family, specifically the army ([Chapter 11](#)).

Third, Herod's search for a successor became increasingly frantic as he aged and his illness worsened. Usually he chose a combination of heirs; even in the first will he may have referred to both brothers, with Alexander in the primary place. His practice of balancing potential successors was a sign either of indecision or of *Realpolitik*. Whatever the case, such delicately balanced solutions were inherently unstable; Herod's unwillingness to trust fully any of his children was fatal to finding an adequate solution. Though the Jewish custom was that all male children inherit, when it came to royal succession there was no compelling reason to split the kingdom or to give several a share of the territory.

Fourth, Josephus is silent on the realities of Herod's Samaritan

marriage with Malthace; there is no good evidence that this was a real or potential problem, except insofar as their children may have imbibed the long-standing mistrust between Judeans and Samaritans. For years Herod had overlooked Malthace's children until near the end of his life, when those children who shared a Samaritan heritage were among his few possibilities for a stable family-dominated solution.

Fifth, children of a banished or divorced wife fell out of favor—as had happened to the children of Doris and Mariamme II—though the children of Mariamme I did not suffer as a direct result of her execution because they inherited royal status. When they fell, it was because of their own actions or behavior.

Sixth, it was natural that, when possible, Herod's choice fell on the eldest and strongest. For much of the time this was Antipater—who was also the most ruthless—despite the uncertain status of Doris and her family, on which Josephus is silent (on Doris, Kokkinos 1998, 208–11). Only at the end did the choice fall on younger children, some of whom may have been unable to assume power if needed.

The family structure—unstable as a result of the many marriages and numerous children, byzantine through internecine warfare—interfered with Herod's finding a satisfactory solution to his need for a successor. He could not deal adequately with family members' unwillingness to get along with one another (especially mothers-in-law), or with the interference of others from outside the family.

Family wealth

Herod's seven successive wills were the visible aspects of a broader set of kinship questions, which have been studied in detail by K. C. Hanson (Hanson 1989/90), drawing on insights of anthropologists and sociologists using information from the primary sources (Malina 1991) that bear on matters of politics, religion, and economics.

Dowry

Among the economic aspects of kinship are matters of dowry, indirect dowry, bridewealth, and inheritance transactions. Dowry is “a pre-mortem inheritance (full or partial) given to the daughter at the time of marriage” (Hanson 1989/90, 20:11) and is a direct expression of a family's honor—the dowry's size being a public display of that honor with its transmission assisting in the acquiring of more honor or new

clients. Herodian dowries were at the upper end of the range of known monetary transfers: when Herod betrothed his daughter Salampsio to his brother Pheroras (“who shared with Herod all the honors of royalty except the diadem”; *War* 1.483), the dowry was the enormous sum of 300 talents. When Pheroras reneged on his betrothal, Herod betrothed Salampsio to Pheroras’s son Phasael III while adding another 100 talents to the dowry (*Ant.* 16.228). Following Herod’s death, Augustus betrothed Roxana and Salome, two other daughters of Herod, to members of the family and gave them each twenty-five talents for their dowries, still a significant sum (*Ant.* 17.322). Since all three were endogamous betrothals within the kinship system, the reality was that a portion of the family’s enormous wealth (see [Chapter 10](#)) was being redistributed to the next generation. As a corollary, when Alexander was executed in 7 BCE, his wife Glaphyra returned to Cappadocia to her father with her dowry. The giving of the dowry also required that it be returned when the relationship ended, to keep the honor intact.

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Indirect dowry and bridewealth

“Indirect dowry’ is property and/or cash given by the groom’s kin either directly to the bride or indirectly through her kin” (Hanson 1990/1, 20:11). Bridewealth covers other goods and services transferred from the groom’s kin to the bride’s kin, additional mechanisms for both families to bestow property on the new couple, thus balancing honor concerns between the two kin-groups and avoiding either becoming the client of the other. Such transfers protected the woman in the eventuality of widowhood or divorce and provided redress in the case of unjust or dishonorable treatment. There are no unmistakable cases of indirect dowry in the Herodian kin-group, but Hanson suggests that Doris’s expensive wardrobe retained by Herod upon their second divorce was a part of an indirect dowry (Hanson 1990/1, 20:15; *War* 1.590; *Ant.* 17.68).

Inheritance

An important element in Roman inheritance was a client’s reciprocity with his patron (Hanson 1989/90, 20:16–18). It is striking that Augustus and Livia were major heirs in Herod’s final will, together to the sum of 1,500 talents plus gold and silver vessels and expensive clothes. Augustus reciprocated by giving Herod’s legacies back to the

family, strengthening the bonds between the Imperial and Herodian families, a relationship that persisted for a century and a half.

Herod's final will awarded each of Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip a share of territory together with proportionate annual incomes. The eldest son, Archelaus, received the largest share, as was Jewish custom; Antipas and Philip tried unsuccessfully to reverse this situation. Salome also inherited; she became ruler (*despotēs*) of three middle-ranking cities (Jamnia/Yavneh, Azotus, Phaselis) and was given a one-time gift, an annual revenue, and the royal palace in Ashkelon, gifts that Salome later gave the Empress Livia, her long-time friend. These unusual exceptions to Jewish practices might be explained either as a result of Roman and Hellenistic practices or as a result of Salome's closeness to the Emperor's family (Hanson 1989/90, 20:19).

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Most of Herod's known children benefitted from the will in some way, a fact that speaks strongly against Smallwood's contention that Malthace, Cleopatra, Elpis, Phaedra, and Pallas were merely concubines. The children's status under Herod's will implied that all were legitimate offspring of full wives (Hanson 1989/90, 20:19). With the exception of his generous treatment of Salome, "Herod followed the Jewish tradition of inheritance distribution" (Hanson 1989/90, 20:20). For sons the customary practices took effect primarily at the time of the death of the *pater familias*, while for daughters the provisions came into play at the time of betrothal; in unusual circumstances, as in Salome's case, the will's beneficiaries included female kin.

Genealogy and descent

The first-century Roman family was exogamous, based on equality of brothers, cohabitation of married sons with parents, no marriage between children of brothers, and monogamy. The Greek family was an egalitarian nuclear family, with equality of brothers, no cohabitation of married sons with parents, no marriage between children of brothers, and monogamy. The Jewish family was endogamous, characterized by equality of brothers, cohabitation of married sons with parents, frequent marriage between children of brothers, and—limited—polygamy (up to eighteen wives for kings; Hanson 1989/90, 19:77). Herod's family was following primarily Jewish norms, not acting in a "Romanized" fashion.

Family tree

Hanson lays out in a columnar table arranged by generations all the kinship data of the Herodian family from Antipater, father of Herod, to the eighth generation. His table provides a complete display of the whole family and corrects errors in previous family trees. Though unfamiliar because it lacks the visual advantages of the more usual diagrams, Hanson's table has the great advantage of completeness (Hanson 1989/90, 19:78–81). We have adopted Hanson's tree as the best vehicle to display the data, modified by the addition of dates. Josephus's information suggests the family did not feel bound tightly by traditional notions of patrilineal descent; they accepted cognatic descent (i.e. links based on female relationships) when useful, as in the case of Mariamme I. Hanson notes:

Aristobulus and Alexander would have [had] no more ascribed honor than Antipater ..., since the father of all three was Herod. But Mariamme's sons, though younger than Antipater, claimed greater honor on account of their Hasmonean descent, and ridiculed Antipater as being born of a non-royal mother, Doris.

(Hanson 1989/90, 19:82; *War* 1.449)

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Obviously, there were substantial differences of opinion about status, but Alexander and Aristobulus—whose status depended on cognate descent—presupposed its legitimacy. It is uncertain whether Judean society agreed.

Herod had two endogamous marriages—with a niece and with a cousin—both placed at the end of Josephus's accounts. He offers no information other than their childlessness (a mark of shame)—not even their names are given (Hanson 1989/90, 19:83; *War* 1.563; *Ant.* 17.19; see Kokkinos 1998, 216–17). The likeliest reason they were listed last was their lack of honor, rather than their order as wives; Hanson notes that in *War* 1.562–3 Mariamme I is dropped to the end of the list following the shame of her execution. The marriages to his niece and cousin could have occurred at any time, even prior to Herod's marriage to Doris. We suggest an intermediate period.

A family tree that identifies all family members has the advantage, especially in an endogamous setting, of identifying all the potential marriage partners. It also shows clearly the family's actual exogamous strategy: thus, Herod married into the Hasmonean royal family and into a priestly Jewish family, while the family included six other exogamous

partners: Salome married Joseph, a close friend, and Costobar, a governor of Idumea, and was betrothed to Syllaeus, a Nabatean noble; Antipater III married the daughter of Antigonos, a Jewish royal; Alexander—and later also Archelaus— married Glaphyra, daughter of the dependent king of Cappadocia; Antipas married the daughter of the king of Nabatea, Herod's nearest and most dangerous neighbor. Herod was more successful in arranging for elite, frequently royal, exogamous marriages for family and friends than he was in arranging marriages for himself: of his own eight exogamous marriages, six were non-noble or non-royal.

Rituals of conversion to Judaism appear for the first time in rabbinic texts of the second and third centuries CE. Prior to that period—certainly in the Second Temple period—a non-Jewish woman was deemed a convert upon marriage to a Jew, so if either Herod or his father Antipater II were considered a Jew, their wives were too. The majority view appears to have been that converts faced no religious disabilities—or only minor ones—and thus, for example, Cypros and Malthace (one a Nabatean and the other a Samaritan) were considered Jews once they were married to Jews (Cohen 2014, 46–59, especially 52–4; Bamberger 1939), though there were undoubtedly differences of opinion among various groups and rabbinic authorities; 11 QT, for example, describes accommodating proselytes in the temple ([Chapter 11](#)).

Not unexpectedly, Herod's descent was a matter of controversy in antiquity, but the disagreements confirm “one's genealogy and descent are critical in determining one's honor, and are thus points of attack, as well as exaggeration” (Hanson 1989/90, 19:82, referring to Malina, noted above). A fuller family tree allows better analysis of family honor, a crucial ingredient in evaluating status, “since honor and status are pivotal Mediterranean values” (Hanson 1989/90, 19:83). A map of Herodian relationships and their ascribed honor will include potential and actual endogamous marriage partners, actual exogamous marriage partners, birth-order, marriage-order, status, and rank (Hanson 1989/90, 19:84).

Marriage and divorce

Endogamy

Biblical and post-Biblical evidence shows “endogamy was the Jewish ideal by the time of the Herodians,” yet “the Herodians practiced a mixture of endogamy and exogamy” (Hanson 1989/90, 19:143). Exogamy, however, was not a deviation; both strategies had advantages. Some endogamous marriages were consanguinal (parallel-cousins, cross-cousins, cross-generational) and some were related by marriage, or affinal. Herod had no strong preference for particular types of endogamy, though parallel-cousins and uncle–niece marriages were the most common. For example, Herod arranged for his brother Pheroras to marry, first, Mariamme I’s sister, then he betrothed Pheroras to Salampsio, his oldest daughter by Mariamme (Pheroras reneged), and later he betrothed Pheroras to Cypros, Salampsio’s sister (Pheroras reneged again); in reneging, Pheroras affronted both Jewish custom and Herod’s honor as family head.

Exogamy

The family enhanced its “honor and power by establishing links with political and religious leaders throughout the Levant” through exogamous marriages (Hanson 1989/90, 19:145), some to elite families, both royal and priestly, and some to non-elite families (or those of unknown status). Herod himself had five of the six known instances of non-elite or unknown status marriages (Malthace, Cleopatra of Jerusalem, Elpis, Phaedra, Pallas). The family contracted eight marriages of males to daughters of royal families, and another seven of females marrying rulers or rulers’ sons. Yet Herod only once arranged a marriage into a royal family for himself, with Mariamme I, perhaps because he was a commoner. Still, it seems strange given his elevation to royal status in 40 BCE. His Hasmonian marriage was especially important to him; together with Pheroras’s marriage to Mariamme’s sister and Antipater’s to Antigonus’s daughter, he aimed to improve his popularity, enhance his legitimacy, and neutralize the threat of a Hasmonian revolt against his rule.

Restrictions

As head of the kin-group, Herod exercised control by arranging marriages for his children, his siblings, and their children. He negotiated at least ten marriages (Hanson 1989/90, 19:147): Salome and Costobar (*Ant.* 15.254); Antipater III and Mariamme III; Antipater III’s son and Pheroras’s daughter (*War* 1.565); Cypros II and Antipater IV; Salampsio and Phasael III (*Ant.* 17.22); Aristobulus I and Berenice I; Alexander II and Glaphyra (*Ant.* 16.11); Pheroras and Alexander I’s daughter (*War*

1.483); Salome I and Alexas; and Salome I's daughter and Alexas's son (*War* 1.566). These were cases depending on his own status; but in other cases he could prevent a marriage, preventing Salome from marrying Syllaeus because Syllaeus refused to be circumcised, for example (*War* 1.487; *Ant.* 16.220–5).

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Serious restrictions were placed on relatives' liberty in marital matters, including their places of residence; among Jewish families, residence was patrilocal: a married son lived with his parents. Josephus's narrative strongly implies this was true in Herod's family, as male children continued to live in the palace. The plots and the intra-generational rivalries presuppose living in close proximity, so family members were on the same "gossip–reputation circuit" (Hanson 1989/90, 19:148).

Divorce

Of the nine divorces Josephus mentions among Herodians, four cases involved the husband divorcing his wife, while in five the wife divorced her husband. Even in Herod's own generation, Herod divorced Doris to marry Mariamme I; after Doris was reinstated he divorced her again; he divorced Mariamme II; Salome divorced Costobar; and Archelaus divorced his wife to marry Glaphyra, who had earlier been married—and borne children—to Alexander. Herod was directly involved in three divorces, four if Salome's divorce—with Herod indirectly involved—is included. Divorce depends upon family loyalty, showing that competition for and maintenance of honor arose even between husband and wife. Though Josephus criticizes women for divorcing their husbands, the evidence suggests "their status as non-priestly, urban elites gave them the social flexibility to act in their own (and their family's) interests in terms of honor" (Hanson 1989/90, 19:150).

Conclusion

Herod's family decisions were not random and capricious: they

were thoroughly Jewish in the structure of their kinship ... [though] they employed some variations on what could be expected from urban and rural non-elites. Their family group exemplified the typical patriarchal family system of the eastern Mediterranean. They were patrilineal, patrilocal, and endogamous; they employed dowry, (probably) indirect dowry, and bridewealth, with the eldest son provided a larger share of the father's inheritance. They were also accountable to their Roman

patrons when it came to inheritance. *Far from random or individually determined, the Herodians conformed to a family system both predictable and patterned.*

(Hanson 1989/90, 20:20, our italics)

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Hanson's analysis is important and correct in its main points. Herod's familial transactions were not whimsical, or primarily a result of passion, greed, anger, or resentment; they were outworkings of a kinship system in which honor and shame were a deep and consistent concern.

Missing from Hanson's analysis is consideration of the executions of family members. From the point of view of an ancient Mediterranean family, execution within the marital sphere was the extreme action of a kinship system where the king's honor was at stake. Similar, even more extreme actions were characteristic of other Mediterranean cultures. In Rome, for example, Augustus banished his daughter Julia; though it brought painful public shame upon him, he refused to relent. He also exiled or executed others in the family ([Chapter 13](#)).

Herod's courtiers at work

As in other royal courts of the period, Herod kept a tight rein by distributing modest amounts of responsibility to a limited number of persons, among whom the most important were family members or spouses of family members. Herod was head of the family, and his say-so determined their positions, marriages, responsibilities, and even death. In these summary comments we draw extensively on the work of Samuel Rocca (2008) and Nikos Kokkinos (1998).

Religion

The only family member to have played an important religious role was Aristobulus III, a member not of Herod's own family but of his wife's. Herod appointed him high priest, but his popularity doomed him to a speedy end in the Jericho swimming pool. He also appointed a father-in-law high priest. A few women within the family were enthusiastic about one or another religious party, mostly the Pharisaic group, but they did not seem to interfere in Herod's affairs other than paying a fine that was owed. Herod's family and courtiers stayed aloof from most of the religious issues of the day.

Some family members had important military roles, before and during Herod's climb to power. Herod's uncle Phallion (*War* 1.130; *Ant.* 14.33), who died in battle, was a minor figure prior to Herod's dominance (Kokkinos 1998, 147–50). More significant was Herod's brother Phasael, whom their father Antipater appointed governor of Jerusalem at the same time as he put Herod in charge of Galilee (*Ant.* 14.158). Mark Antony appointed Phasael and Herod together as tetrarchs, a role that Josephus understands as “government of the Jews” (*Ant.* 14.326), though the title tetrarch usually meant rule over a limited part of a larger entity. When the Parthians captured Phasael, he courageously killed himself by bashing his head against the wall to evade Antigonus's clutches (*Ant.* 15.12–13). Pheroras, another brother, played a military role as a young man in charge of Alexandreion, a key fortress in the Hasmonean defensive line overlooking the Jordan Valley. Herod's other brother Joseph II also died in war, after defending Masada—another key fortress—and protecting Herod's interests in Idumea (*Ant.* 14.448–50).

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Herod's cousin Achiab was, in Kokkinos's reconstruction, a son of this same Joseph; his sister may have been one of the unnamed wives of Herod (Kokkinos 1998, 153–4). Achiab was commander of the royal guard in Jerusalem at what seems a relatively young age; at the time of Herod's death in Jericho he was at Herod's bedside preventing him from stabbing himself to death. He is portrayed as a reliable and trusted associate of Herod's over a long period of time.

Sharing the rule

Three prominent family members shared the rule over some portion of Herod's territory. Herod's uncle Joseph I was regent for a period of time when Herod was summoned to Laodicea to be questioned by Mark Antony on Aristobulus III's death (ca. 34 BCE). This, however, led to his execution when Herod discovered, on his return from a successful defense, that Joseph had revealed Herod's instructions to kill Mariamme if he should not return from Laodicea (Kokkinos 1998, 150–3). Pheroras, Herod's youngest brother, was in charge of Herod's territories and all family matters when Herod hurried to Rhodes to meet with Octavian after Actium (31–30 BCE). Herod later persuaded Augustus to

carve off Perea for Pheroras to rule in the late 20s BCE (*Ant.* 15.362; *War* 1.483). He played an unsettling role in Herod's family problems in Herod's last decade, leading to serious tensions between the two brothers, tensions that led Pheroras to refuse reconciliation with Herod, though Herod, when Pheroras was seriously ill, went to see him (Kokkinos 1998, 164–75). The third family member with a significant subordinate role was Costobar, Herod's brother-in-law, who governed Idumea and Gaza (*Ant.* 15.252–3; Kokkinos 1998, 178–82) from about 37 onwards. In about 25 BCE, when Salome divorced him, he fell from power and was executed. Costobar's disloyalty to Herod through much of this period was capped by his negotiations with Cleopatra.

When Herod returned from Rome after the reconciliation with his three sons in 12 bce, he shared the royal title with them. Josephus reports (*War* 1.458–59),

I now declare these my three sons kings They are entitled to the succession, this one [Antipater] by his age, the others [Alexander and Aristobulus] by their noble birth Those, therefore, whom Caesar has united and their father now nominates, do you uphold: let the honours you award them be neither undeserved nor unequal, but proportioned to the rank of each.

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Alexander and Aristobulus soon fell out of favor yet again, and by 7 BCE had been executed; Antipater survived longer in the center of things, until he too was executed in 4 BCE.

Counselors

Among those who gave counsel to Herod, his sister Salome stands out as the most unusual. Not only was she married successively to three of Herod's closest associates—Joseph I, Costobar, and Alexas—she was a formidable influence in her own right as Herod's sibling who supported him through thick and thin for his whole time as king (see Kokkinos 1998, 177–92). Though she was always loyal to her brother, she was a disruptive element in Herod's familial troubles. Her judgment was most questionable in the matter of Syllaeus of Nabatea, who wished to marry her; a possibility was thereby dangled in front of her that she might in the long term become Nabatean queen if Syllaeus were successful in weakening Obodas III and then succeeding him. As events transpired, when Obodas died he was succeeded by Aretas IV, who may have shared power with Syllaeus for a short while (Al-Rawabdeh 2015, 73–82). To judge from Herod's bequests to Salome, he had deep affection for his

sister. He ensured that she was well provided for on his death. Salome was the only woman known to have had Herod's ear; at the same time, as her friendship with Livia shows, she had a direct and private route into the inner circles of the Imperial family in Rome.

Herod surrounded himself with a number of "friends" (*philoï*), among whom Salome's third husband, Alexas, was "one of the most intimate" (Rocca 2008, 74, 84, 86; Kokkinos 1998, 185). Alexas and Salome were in Jericho at the time of Herod's death and wisely did not carry out his instructions to execute those "summoned to the hippodrome"; they then read to the army Herod's letter thanking them and asking their support of Archelaus. Next, another of Herod's *philoï*, Ptolemy, "who had been entrusted with the king's seal," read Herod's will naming Archelaus king, though Ptolemy was careful to point out that this did not take effect until Augustus had approved it (*Ant.* 17.193). Ptolemy was *epitropos* and minister of the interior, working beside Nicolas, minister of foreign affairs and ambassador to Augustus but also an intellectual and author. Together Ptolemy and Nicolas "held the most important managerial positions in the kingdom, after Herod, and functioned at the same level of power as Herod's uncle and brother" (Rocca 2008, 84–6). Since these responsibilities came toward the end of Herod's reign, we can conclude that *philoï* had taken over roles that originally had been carried out by family members.

There were other *philoï* near Herod. Among those mentioned by Rocca were various orators and ambassadors: Olympus was ambassador to Augustus; Archelaus of Cappadocia was Herod's son's father-in-law; Alexas has been noted above; Antipater Gadia and Dositheus and Lysimachus were three friends who were executed for involvement in Costobar's plot (Rocca 2008, 86). In addition to friends of Herod himself there were others who were *philoï* of his sons, such as Antiphilus, Demetrius, and Sappinas; other occasional but influential visitors were Eurycles of Sparta, Melas ambassador of Archelaus of Cappadocia, Evaratus, and Crinagoras (Rocca 2008, 87–8).

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Finally, on a lower level after *philoï*, Herod's domestic staff included those with a direct responsibility for the king, such as his steward and his cupbearer, his personal servants, eunuchs, and tutors for his children.

The family tentacles were not very numerous or particularly long. A hierarchy of persons surrounded Herod, sharing his power, influencing him from a variety of vantage points both for good and ill, and carrying

out his wishes. At the top of this hierarchy were uncles and brothers and others related by marriage. This was a close group, but not a tightly knit group of like-minded persons. As one went beyond the core group, the rivalries and tensions became more obvious and intense; the number of executions among some whom we would consider an in-group underscores the challenges of managing the kingdom. Among the bureaucracy headed by Nicolas and Ptolemy, there was a relatively strong sense of loyalty to Herod personally, but it is apparent that it was not impossible to suborn some whose loyalty was shaky.

We have not mentioned his own sons in this overview for the simple reason that, with the exception of Antipater from about 14 BCE onwards, most of them were too young to be influential. Antipater needs a few additional words. For a very long period after Herod divorced Doris, Antipater played no official role at all, though he seems to have had enough occasional contacts with Herod that he could help persuade his father to take his mother back. After returning to the palace in 14 BCE Antipater, through a mixture of necessity on Herod's part and intrigue on Antipater's part, became influential in affairs of the kingdom. In his zeal to succeed his father and despite being named Herod's heir, he overreached himself; but for several years he was effectively co-ruler of Judea with his father, as Josephus noted in the quotation above.

Appendix 1: Herod's family tree

The following family tree (see [Table 12.1](#)) is indebted both in details and its overall structure to Hanson's table (1989/90, 19:79–81); we have altered it with simplifications, corrections, and modifications to agree with our independent decisions. The main difference between Hanson's table and ours is the inclusion of dates, many of which are approximations. When the evidence is too tenuous for an estimated date, we use a question mark. Capital letters indicate an individual who held a governing position of some sort; [00] refers to a union that was childless. In a few cases a date in [] indicates a betrothal that was not consummated. For a schematic family tree, see Table 1.2; for an alternative family tree, see Kokkinos (1998, 243–5).

Table 12.1 Herod's family tree

<i>Name</i>	<i>Birth/Death</i>	<i>Father Mother</i>	<i>Spouse</i>	<i>Spouse's Birth/ Marriage/Death</i>	<i>Spouse's Status</i>
First Generation					
ANTIPATER I	148/?				
Second Generation					
ANTIPATER II	113/43	ANTIPATER I	Cypros I		exogamous
Phallion	105/65	ANTIPATER I	?		
Joseph I	95/34	ANTIPATER I	sister of Dositheus SALOME I		exogamous bro's daughter
Third Generation					
PHASAEI I	752/40	ANTIPATER II Cypros I	?		exogamous
HEROD I	73/4	ANTIPATER II Cypros I	Doris Mariamme I niece [00] cousin [00] Malthace Cleopatra Mariamme II Pallas Phaedra Elpis Doris [second time]	147/ 547/37/29 1307/ 1297/ 127/4 125/ 123/ 121/ 119/ 117/ 114/	exogamous; divorced royal; executed bro's d'tr father's bro's d'tr exogamous exogamous priestly; divorced exogamous exogamous exogamous remarried, banished
Joseph II	703/38	ANTIPATER II Cypros I	?		
PHERORAS	ca. 68/5	ANTIPATER II Cypros I	d'tr of Alexander I BACTRA II	507/ 116/	bro's wife's sister exogamous

SALOME I	65?/10 CE	ANTIPATER II Cyprus I	JOSEPH II COSTOBAR	ca. 45/34 28	ruler; executed royal; div'd; executed
Achiab Daughter	ca. 60/4	Phallion? Joseph I Phallion?	[SYLLAFUS] Alexas ?	416/6 19?	ruler; executed by Augustus exogamous
Antiochus; buried at Seythopolis		Phallion	HEROD I	73/29/4	father's bro's son
Fourth Generation					
son? (War 1.275)	47?	PHASAEI I			
Phasael II	44?	PHASAEI I	Salampsio Herod I	332/ca. 20 73/302/4	father's bro's d'tr father's bro royal
daughter	41?	PHASAEI I	d'tr of ANTIGONUS	14?	
Antipater III executed by Herod	45?/4	HEROD I Doris			
Alexander II	36/7	HEROD I	Mariamne III Glaphyra	5? ca. 35/17/ca. 7 CE	bro's d'tr royal
executed by Herod		Mariamne I			
Aristobulus I	35?/7	HEROD I	Berenice I	36?/17	father's sis's d'tr
executed by Herod		Mariamne I			
son	33?	HEROD I			
died in Rome		Mariamne I			
Salampsio	33?	HEROD I	Phasael III	44?/7	father's bro's son
		Mariamne I			
Cyprus II	32?	HEROD I	Antipater IV	342?/7	father's sis's son
		Mariamne I			
Herod Philipp I	22?	HEROD I	Herodias	8?/8 CE	bro's d'tr; divorced
		Mariamne II			

Table 12.1 (continued)

Name	Birth/Death	Father Mother	Spouse	Spouse's Birth/ Marriage/Death	Spouse's Status
Fourth Generation					
ARCHELAUS I	23?/	HEROD I Malthace	Marianne IV Cleopatra	35/ca. 6 ca/7 ca?	exogamous; divorced bro's wife; royal royal; divorced
HEROD ANTIPAS	21?/	HEROD I	Phasaelis, daughter ARETAS IV		
Olympias	19?/	Malthace HEROD I	Herodias Joseph III	45?/	bro's d'tr father's bro's son
HEROD PHILIP II	20?/34 ca.	Malthace HEROD I	Salome III		bro's daughter
Herod II	18?/ca. 4	Cleopatra HEROD I	[00] ?		
Phasael III	19?/ca. 4	Cleopatra HEROD I	?		
Roxana	16?/	Pallas HEROD I	PIERORAS' son	30?/4/	father's bro's son; betrothed by Augustus
Salome II	17?/	Phaedra HEROD I	PIERORAS' son	18?/4/	father's bro's son; betrothed by Augustus
Alexander III	42/	Pipis COSTOBAR			
Herod III	39/	SALOME I COSTOBAR			
Derenice I	36/	SALOME I COSTOBAR	Aristobulus I	35?/17?/	mother's bro's son
Antipater IV	34/	SALOME I COSTOBAR	Theudion Cyprius II	17/ 32?/	mother's bro's wife's brother

daughter	31?	COSTOBAR SALOME I	son of Alexas	7?	mother's husband's son
Joseph III	45?	Joseph I	Olympias	19?/ca. 8	father's bro's d't'r
son	20?	PHERORAS	Salome II	17?/4?	father's bro's d't'r
son	18?	PHERORAS	Roxana	18?/4?	father's bro's d't'r
daughter	13?	PHERORAS	son of Antipater III	13?	father's bro's son's son
child	8?	PHERORAS slave	?		
<i>Fifth Generation</i>					
HEROD IV, CHALCIS	15/48 CE	Aristobulus I Berenice I	Mariamne V	11/15 CE	father's bro's d't'r
MARCUS JULIUS HEROD AGRIPPA I	ca. 10/44 CE	Aristobulus I	Berenice III daughter of Antipater III Cyprus III	12?	bro's d't'r bro's d't'r father's bro's d't'r
Alexandra		Berenice I Aristobulus I	Philippon of Chalcis PTOLEMY OF CHALCIS		royal
Aristobulus II	10?	Berenice I Aristobulus I	Jotape I		royal
Herodias	8?	Aristobulus I Berenice I	Herod Philip I	22?/8 CE	father's bro; divorced
Mariamne III	6?	Aristobulus I Berenice I	HEROD ANTIPAS Antipater III	21?/30 CE	father's bro
Antipater V	15?	Phasaël III Salampsio	?		
Herod V	13?	Phasaël III Salampsio	?		

<i>Name</i>	<i>Birth/Death</i>	<i>Father Mother</i>	<i>Spouse</i>	<i>Spouse's Birth/ Marriage/Death</i>	<i>Spouse's Status</i>
Fifth Generation					
Alexander IV	11?	Phasael III Solampsio	?		
Alexandra II	9?	Phasael III	Uimius Cyprus [00]		
			PTOLEMY OF CHALCIS		
Cypros III	7?	Solampsio Phasael III	AGRIPPA I	13?/44 CE	mother's bro's son
Cypros IV	12?	Solampsio Antipater IV	Alexas Helcias		father's mother's husband's son
Mariamne V	1?	Cypros II Joseph III	HEROD IV		mother's father's son's son
		Olympias			
TIGRANES IV	ca. 16/36 CE	Alexander II Glaphyra	Unnamed dtr Pheroras [00]		grandfather's bro's d'tr
DHIKRAN of Armenia					
Alexander V	14?	Alexander II Glaphyra	?		
son	13?	Antipater III d'tr of ANTIGONUS	d'tr of Pheroras	13?	father's father's bro's d'tr
daughter	12?	Antipater III	HEROD IV	15?/2/48 CE	father's bro's son
Sixth Generation					
MARCUS JULIUS	27/93 CE	AGRIPPA I	[00]		incestuous relationship with sister?
AGRIPPA II		Cypros III	liaison? Berenice		
Drusus	23 CE/	AGRIPPA I Cypros III	[00]		

Berenice III	ca. 30 CE?	AGRIPPA I Cypros III	Marcus [00] HEROD IV POLEMO [00] [111 US] Archelaus III	15?/48 CE 12/ca. 50 CE/74 39 CE/81 CE	ruling family father's bro royal; divorced royal; [mistress] exogamous; divorced
Mariamme VI	32 CE?	AGRIPPA I Cypros III	Demetrius AZIZUS King of Emesa	?/ca. 51 CE/54	Alabarch royal; father's bro's wife's brother divorced
Drusilla		AGRIPPA I Cypros III	M. A. FELIX	ca. 5 CE/ca. 52?	ruler
ARISTOBULUS IV OF CHALCIS, ARMENIA	17 CE?	HEROD IV	Salome III	14 CE/35?	father's sis's [1] r
Berriicianus		Mariamme IV HEROD IV Berenice	?		
Ilyrcanus		HEROD IV Berenice	?		
Salome III	14?	Herod Philip I Herodias	HEROD PHILIP II ARISTOBULUS IV	20 CE/30? 34 CE 17 CE/35?	father's bro father's bro's son's son
Jotape II		Aristobulus II Jotape I Alexas Helcias Cypros IV	[00] ?		
Cypros V					

Table 12.1 (continued)

Name	Birth/Death	Father Mother	Spouse	Spouse's Birth/ Marriage/Death	Spouse's Status
Seventh Generation					
Herod VI	38 CE/	ARISTOBULUS IV Salome III	?		
Agrippa III	40 CE/	ARISTOBULUS IV Salome III	?		
Aristobulus V	42 CE/	ARISTOBULUS IV Salome III	?		
Perenice IV		Archelaus III Mariamne V	?		
Agrippinus		DEMETRIUS Mariamne V	?		
(Antonius)		M. A. FELIX	?		
Agrippa IV	79 CE	Drusilla			
GAIUS JULIUS		TICRANUS V	Iotape III		royal
ALEXANDER VI of Cetus		Opgalli			
Eighth Generation					
C. JULIUS AGRIPPA of Cetus	ca. 72 CE/	ALEXANDER VI Iotapoc III	?		
C. JULIUS ALEXANDER BERENICIANUS of Cetus	ca. 75 CE/ 150	ALEXANDER VI Iotapoc III	?		
Julia Iotapa	ca. 80/	Iotapoc III	C. Quadratus Bassus		

Table 12.1 is indebted to Hanson's work on Herod's family and its extensive kinship connections (Hanson 1989/90), but it introduces proposed dates and differs from his in some details. At several points in the early generations, we have followed Kokkinos's dates (Kokkinos 1998), though we incline to later dates in some cases.

Table 12.1 is indebted to Hanson's work on Herod's family and its extensive kinship connections (Hanson 1989/90), but it introduces proposed dates and differs from his in some details. At several points in the early generations, we have followed Kokkinos's

Appendix 2: Nikos Kokkinos's chronology of Herod's wives

There are important differences between Kokkinos's conclusions and ours with respect to the ordering of Herod's wives and the dates of their marriages. [Table 12.2](#) includes two additional columns derived from Kokkinos (Kokkinos 1998, 208, 243, 244) and adds Rocca's views in tabular form.

Rocca makes the important and constructive point that Mariamme's royal status distinguishes her from the rest of Herod's wives: "a king or emperor cannot divorce a queen, but must eliminate her according to the rules of the game." On the other hand, Rocca says that the claim that Herod had more than one wife at a time is "an absurd notion . . . and would have made Herod an exception among the Hellenistic and Roman rulers."

A hypothetical Herodian harem would not only have been unique, but would have made a terrible impression upon his subjects. If Herod desired numerous women, he could have taken concubines or prostitutes Since Herod's women were wives and not queens, he could marry and divorce them at will.

(Rocca 2008, 76–7)

Rocca's statement, however, is contradicted by Josephus's specific comment that Herod was polygamous (*War* 1.477). Herod sometimes, but not always, had more than one wife at a time; as we reconstruct matters, he was monogamous during his sequential marriages to Doris and Mariamme I. Later, it is impossible to be certain about overlaps in marriages or the number of concurrent marriages.

Kokkinos has the fullest discussion, though we differ from him in the sequence and timing of the middle marriages. There are several oddities in his conclusions. (1) In Kokkinos's scheme Herod married a niece in the same year as he married Mariamme I and he married his cousin a few years later, while still married to Mariamme (Kokkinos 1998, 216–17). Given Mariamme's status and that marriage's dynastic importance, it is highly unlikely that Herod had other wives overlapping with Mariamme. (2) Kokkinos believes that Herod contracted three marriages following Mariamme I's execution (in 29/28/27 BCE); these three rather

different kinds of wives presuppose different marital strategies and are unlikely at this stage. (3) He proposes three more marriages in late 16 BCE, the year when Herod was occupied visiting Marcus Agrippa in Lesbos. These weddings to Pallas and Phaedra and Elpis came, according to Kokkinos, “at the same moment, probably on the occasion of the double wedding of his Hasmonean sons” (Kokkinos 1998, 240–1); he says Herod aimed to celebrate the sons’ marriages by his own marriage with “Hellenized Idumaeans/Phoenician ladies.” In our view, these postulated weddings appear inexplicably inconsistent with a Hasmonean wedding celebration.

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Table 12.2 Herod’s wives

	"old chron" <i>Hoelmer</i>	"new chron" <i>Josephus</i> Ant.	<i>Kokkinos</i>	<i>Rocca</i>	<i>Richardson/Fisher</i>
	<i>Kokkinos</i> 1998, 243	<i>Kokkinos</i> 1998, 244	<i>Kokkinos</i> 1998, 208	<i>Rocca</i> 2008, 76-7	
Doris	47 BCE	47	ca. 47-37	47-38	47
Mariamme I	37	37	37-29/28	38-29	37
[Nicce]	22	37	ca. 37	ca. 29	29?
[Cousin]	22	ca. 33	ca. 34/33	ca. 29	28?
Malthace	22	28	29-4 or 5	ca. 28	27
Mariamme II	23	29/28	29/28-7/6	post-29	23
Cleopatra	22	28/27	28/27	28-27	25
Pallas	15	15	ca. late 16	ca. 16	21
Phaedra	15	15	ca. late 16	ca. 16	19
Elpis	15	15	ca. late 16	ca. 16	17
Doris (second)	14	14	ca. 14		14

Comparison of the ordering and dating of Herod's wives in five chronologies, demonstrating agreements at the beginning and end, with significant differences in marriages in the middle.

The date of Herod's marriage to Mariamme II, Kokkinos argues, was soon after the death of Mariamme I in 29/28 BCE, "when his tie with the Hasmonean dynasty was suddenly broken and when no Jewish wife (and in fact no wife at all) was to be accounted for" (Kokkinos 1998, 221). This, he holds, was a result of psychological depression, dismissing the more likely 23 BCE as the result of an uncritical reading of *Ant.* 15.317–19. The year 23 BCE is too late, in his opinion, because their son, Herod Philip I, would still have been a minor in 7 BCE when he was named heir; he thinks Josephus confused completion of work on the palace with its beginning, despite Josephus's statement in *Ant.* 15.323, in which construction details sound singularly clear. We propose that 23 BCE is likelier; near the end of his life Herod needed several plausible heirs, and a son who was about fifteen years old could realistically be named in a will, when the will's author hoped he might still have a little time left.

Kokkinos does not present arguments in favor of the coincidence of Herod's marriages to Mariamme II, Malthace, and Cleopatra, though he implies the reason could be Herod's depression over the death of Mariamme I. He is not alone in opting for multiple marriages close together: both Hoehner and Rocca (proposing different dates) claim that five marriages—Mariamme II, Malthace, Cleopatra, the niece, and the cousin—all occurred within a one or two-year period, for Hoehner 23/22 BCE and for Rocca 29/28 BCE. Such solutions seem desperate.

To return, finally, to Herod's relationship with Mariamme I, it needs to be emphasized that this marriage was his most fundamental relationship within his many marriages. We noted in [Chapter 3](#) that Mariamme I was so important to him and to his political strategy that he terminated his first marriage with Doris when he contracted marriage with Mariamme. As long as his marriage with Mariamme continued, there would have been political constraints on Herod entering other marriages. While Herod and Mariamme's relationship was extremely volatile, Josephus does not indicate that the volatility was the result of other marriages. Jealousy, yes; conflicting relationships, no. A claim that at this stage Herod was polygamous needs better evidence than has been produced.

Mariamme I's death in about 29 BCE was traumatic and destabilizing, and undoubtedly Herod reacted to the event. But how? In place of Kokkinos's three more or less simultaneous marriages, it is more

reasonable to posit that he entered sequentially into the two marriages—with his niece and his cousin—that required little or no negotiation. We continue to think they should be dated close to each other as a part of the consequences of his execution of Mariamme I and his debilitating illness in Samaria, with his marriage to Malthace coming a short while later.

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13 The Herods in Roman perspective

Pompey, Mark Antony, and Julius Caesar

For a century and a half, Herod's family was known to Rome's elite, beginning when Pompey intervened directly in Judean affairs (65–63 BCE) using two rival royal brothers' civil war as pretext. Herod's father, Antipater, helped Hyrcanus, one of the brothers, win the struggle through military and negotiating skills; he supported Gabinius's foray into Egypt and advised him on affairs in the region, securing in Rome a favorable reputation and in Judea a dominant military and political role.

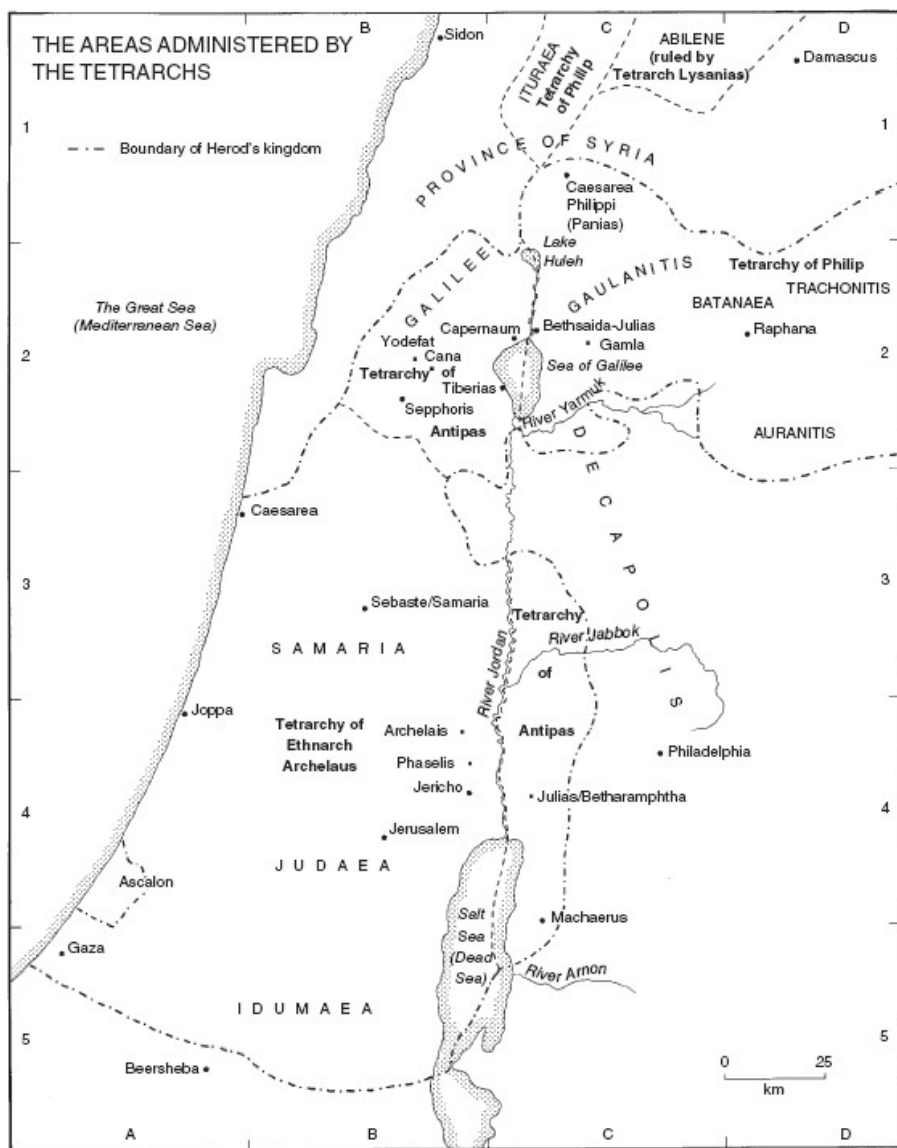
Julius Caesar also used Antipater in Caesar's Egyptian campaign in 47 BCE ([Chapters 2](#) and [3](#); *Ant.* 14.127–60). Caesar rewarded Antipater with “Roman citizenship and exemption from taxation everywhere” (*Ant.* 14.137), increasing the family's influence and broadening Rome's estimation of him. Citizenship opened up new possibilities in Roman society, while tax-exemption added to the family's already substantial wealth. Caesar's award of citizenship and clientship meant that his family became part of the Julian clan, so Herod's full Roman name—not found, however, in any primary source—would properly have been Gaius Julius Herodes.

Caesar and Herod had no direct contact while Caesar was in the east, so far as we know, though Herod was becoming a promising player. He and his brother Phasael took reinforcements for Caesar's troops to Apamea (Qalaat al-Madiq) in Syria in 45 BCE after Bassus assassinated Sextus Caesar (*War* 1.216–17; *Ant.* 14.268–70; Cassius Dio 47.26–7). Julius Caesar was assassinated the next year and Antipater was murdered soon thereafter, interrupting a family connection that had begun so promisingly.

Herod transferred his loyalty smoothly and predictably to Mark Antony. At about the same time Cassius—one of Caesar's assassins, then in control of Syria—appointed Herod *stratēgos* of Coele-Syria,

continuing the role Sextus Caesar had given Herod earlier (*War* 1.225; *Ant.* 14.280).

After Mark Antony and Octavian's defeat of Brutus and Cassius at the battle of Philippi (42 BCE), as Antony headed across Asia, a Judean delegation intercepted him, accusing Phasaël and Herod of usurping Hyrcanus's power (*Ant.* 14.301–2). Antony met Herod at Daphne, near Antioch. He recalled his friendship with Antipater—Herod may have prompted his memory with a bribe—and refused to hear Herod and Phasaël's accusers, instead appointing both brothers as tetrarchs of Judea (*Ant.* 14.324–6; *War* 1.243–4). In a short period of time, three Roman commanders in the east—Sextus Caesar, Cassius, and Mark Antony (Cassius Dio 49.22.5), all from different political perspectives—judged the two energetic young men reliable and competent. Herod, the younger brother, was viewed as a particularly strong and trustworthy player in Levantine politics (Barrett 2009).



Map 13.1 Map of Judea under the Tetrarchs. Antipas governed Galilee and Perea, separated by Scythopolis; Archelaus ruled Idumea, Judea, and Samaria; Philip ruled Gaulanitis, Auranitis, Trachonitis, and Batanea. Herod allotted Phasaelis (Fasayli), Azotus (Ashdod), and Iamnia (Yavne) to his sister Salome.

Parthia was a critical piece in the Levantine game, menacing Rome's interests in the area. Parthia put a pawn in play first, by establishing an

alliance with Hyrcanus and Herod's rival, Antigonus, naming him king of Judea. But when Herod arrived in Rome seeking support for Hyrcanus, Rome countered the threat to Syria, Asia, and Judea by appointing Herod king in Antigonus's (and Hyrcanus's) place. Presumably this appointment made good sense to Rome because it needed someone strong on that flank and it must have agreed with the prevailing view that Hyrcanus was not sufficiently aggressive. Herod would help both to protect routes between Syria and Egypt and to supply Rome's troops, if Rome were to launch a Parthian campaign.

As the fragile relationship between Octavian and Mark Antony degenerated, Herod supported Antony. Antony and Herod had many years to cement a relationship and, more to the point, Antony knew and understood Levantine politics first-hand. Cleopatra was important to Antony's power-base; she was queen to his king, which was exactly what Rome feared. At the critical moment, however, when Antony and Cleopatra were about to face Octavian, Antony asked Herod to engage Nabatea in a side action, causing Herod to miss the decisive engagement at Actium between the rivals (Schmid 2009).

Octavian

Octavian and Marcus Agrippa decisively out-maneuvered Antony at Actium, forcing Antony to flee to Egypt in Cleopatra's wake. For his part, Herod raced to meet Octavian in Rhodes; Octavian may not have known from first-hand experience Herod's strengths and weaknesses, but he would have understood well Rome's eastern commanders' confidence in Herod and he would have appreciated Herod's *chutzpah* in initiating a meeting. Strabo reflects a Roman view: Herod

was so superior to his predecessors, particularly in his intercourse with the Romans and in his administration of affairs of state, that he received the title of king, being given that authority first by Antony and later by Augustus Caesar.

(Geog. 16.2.46)

Despite the fact that Herod's contacts in Rome were almost all on the "wrong" side, he successfully navigated the shifting currents of power politics, changing sides skillfully; no small feat for a minor player in Rome's complicated scene.

Octavian's generous forgiveness of Herod at Rhodes established a debt and a commitment that never wavered over the next quarter-century. They did not meet regularly; their longest and most sustained contact came almost immediately following their meeting in Rhodes,

when Octavian visited Herod in Judea, making a triumphant progress through Herod's lands. A few years later (27 BCE), after the Senate awarded Octavian the title "Augustus" with new powers, Octavian's relations with dependent kings became more personal. His connection with Herod was as close as with any other and closer than most, no doubt due to Herod's flourishing friendship with Marcus Agrippa (*War* 1.400; *Ant.* 15.361).

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Augustus and Herod shared a pressing concern as rulers to arrange an orderly transition to the next generation. Augustus's most hopeful move came in 17 BCE when he adopted his two grandsons—children of Marcus Agrippa and Julia—and made Marcus Agrippa his heir (Goldsworthy 2014, 322–4). The urgency became more pressing after Agrippa's death in 12 BCE (Goldsworthy 2014, 360–2). After Augustus gave Herod the right to name his own successor(s), Herod drew up his first will ([Chapter 12](#)), but growing problems with Alexander and Aristobulus prompted him in 14 BCE to bring Antipater back onto the scene, writing his second will to confirm new arrangements. In 12 BCE, at the same time as Augustus was facing the loss of Marcus Agrippa, Herod wrote his third will.

Excursus: the massacre of the innocents

A preoccupation with succession appears in a backhanded way in one of the few direct references to Herod in the New Testament (Matt. 2:1–18). The so-called "massacre of the innocents" has shaped Herod's public legacy more than Josephus's nuanced accounts. Matthew's birth story claims Herod was enraged when he heard there was an astrological prediction of a "successor"—a ruler of the last days, a messianic king of Jews.

Given rulers' concerns for orderly succession, the underlying context is understandable, though the conclusion is far-fetched: Herod learned that Bethlehem was the place a "ruler" would be born and directed the Zoroastrian Magi there, but they failed to return through Jerusalem on their way home after they had located the baby, so Herod, determined to eliminate potential successors, took matters into his own hands, killing boys under the age of two in the Bethlehem area.

The story includes several indications that Matthew constructed it, more or less of whole cloth: (1) it is absent from the other gospels; (2)

there are major differences between Matthew's and Luke's birth accounts; (3) Josephus and other first-century sources are silent concerning the event; (4) rather obvious theological concerns account for the story's development; (5) it relies on Old Testament motifs to develop the story (Brown 1999, 188–90, 225–8). Herod's killing of the Bethlehem children is unconvincing history.

Another document from the early Christian period, the *Testament of Moses*, describes Herod's behavior. Its dating is controversial, particularly [chapters 5](#) and [6](#), which could be first century CE. Some parts bearing on Herod (*Test. Mos.* 6:2–6) seem to resonate with Josephus, especially the phrase “slay the old and the young.” But this does not naturally imply babies in Bethlehem and the phrase “as the Egyptians did” shows how Christians wrote history to align with Hebrew Bible precedents (see Priest 1983, 919–34); in the end it does not support the historical accuracy of Mathew's account of Herod.

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Herod and Jesus's lives must have overlapped, since Herod's death was around Passover 4 BCE (Barnes 1968; Filmer 1966; Edwards 1982; though some scholars prefer dates around 1 BCE), and the most likely date for Jesus's birth is 7 BCE (Matt. 2:1; Luke 1:5). The latter date is based mainly on one tenuous clue, the “star of Bethlehem,” which has been interpreted as the triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in that year (Stauffer 1955, 36–7; Schaumberger 1925); it could have prompted a story about “magi” from the east. This year happens to be the same as the year Herod executed two of his sons. Though they were hardly “innocents,” the legendary “massacre of the innocents” may reflect a Christian dramatization of Herod's execution of his own children.

Augustus, Herod, and Archelaus

We have referred more than once to Augustus's comment that it was better to be Herod's pig than his child; Herod avoided killing pigs but he did kill his children. In a parallel way Augustus's difficulties in settling the succession were tinged with problems of relatives' deaths: he lost Marcus Agrippa in 12 BCE, Drusus his stepson in 9 BCE, Tiberius his stepson retired to Rhodes in 6 BCE; he executed his nephew Iullus Antonius in 2 BCE, banished his daughter Julia at the same time, and lost Lucius his grandson to illness in 2 CE; two years later he lost his grandson Gaius as the result of a wound (4 CE) and two years after that he exiled Postumus, another grandson (6 CE). Augustus's difficulties

were greater than Herod's and the trail of disasters for his succession longer.

Augustus was not blind to Herod's faults and his confidence occasionally wavered. At Herod's death Augustus honored his wishes—while meeting Rome's needs for security and stability—though he withheld the title king, naming Archelaus ethnarch. No doubt Augustus was uncertain of Archelaus's suitability, an evaluation that seems prescient in retrospect.

Archelaus was Herod's sixth oldest son (b. ca. 23 BCE). He first married Mariamme, possibly his niece (Kokkinos 1998, 227), and then Glaphyra, daughter of Archelaus of Cappadocia and the divorced wife of King Juba of Mauretania, as well as the widow of Archelaus's half-brother Alexander (*War* 2.111–17; *Ant.* 17.339–55; 18.1–108; Cassius Dio 55.27). Archelaus's second marriage was contrary to Torah: Glaphyra had children, so Torah's provision for Levirate marriage (marriage to a deceased brother's wife when there were no children) did not apply. Although her first husband was deceased, her second husband was not (Moen 2009).

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Excursus: a New Testament throne story

Augustus and Archelaus are the subject of a story embedded in a New Testament parable (Luke 19:11–27; cf. Matt. 25:14–30; Kloppenborg 1988, 200–1; Jeremias 1963, 58–63; Scott 1989, 217–35), two parts of which can be disentangled to isolate an earlier narrative (Kloppenborg 1990, 72–3; Havener 1987, 146):

(11) ... he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the reign of God was to appear immediately. (12) He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom and then to return. ..." (14) But his citizens hated him and sent an embassy after him saying, "We do not want this man to reign over us." (15a) When he returned, having received the kingdom, ... (24a) he said to those who stood by, ... (27) "But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me."

(Luke 19:11, 12, 14, 15, 24, 27)

The "throne claimant" story may have been longer than this reconstructed narrative; still, its removal improves Luke's form of the parable.¹ The story echoes Archelaus's experience: (1) a nobleman goes

to a far country to seek a kingdom; (2) his citizens hate him; (3) an embassy follows after him; (4) he gets the kingdom; and (5) he slays his enemies. There is little doubt that Archelaus prompts the story, though a few minor details do not fit Archelaus exactly: Archelaus received an *ethnarchy*, not a *kingdom*; he killed some *before* he left, while others were killed by the governor of Syria, Publius Quinctilius Varus, when putting down revolts (*War* 2.43–65; *Ant.* 17.254–85); the fact that Augustus later deposed him is not mentioned. A decade after his killing of pilgrims at Passover (*War* 1.1–13; *Ant.* 17.200–18) and following Judean and Samaritan objections to his rule, Augustus lost patience with Archelaus (*War* 2.111–13; *Ant.* 17.342–4; Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.46) and banished the couple to Vienna (Vienne) in Gaul in 6 CE. His misrule came to bitter fruition in the revolt of 66–73 CE (Goodman 1987; Fenn 1992).

Augustus, Livia, Archelaus, and Philip

When Rome “liquidated” Archelaus’s estate (*Ant.* 18.26) to govern Judea, Samaritis, and Idumea directly, a census was necessary, which Quirinius, governor of Syria, conducted in 6 CE (Luke 2:1–4; Acts 5:37). The timing of Quirinius’s census conflicts with a New Testament reference to a census at the time of Jesus’s birth; indeed, a census before Herod’s death founders on the fact that “Roman taxes could not possibly have been levied in Palestine” during Herod’s reign (Schürer 1973–87, 1.399–427). The census must have occurred after Archelaus was deposed, which Josephus correctly indicates by dating Quirinius’s census thirty-seven years after Actium (*Ant.* 18.26), or 6 CE.

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Herod’s will had granted Augustus and Livia huge bequests of 10,000,000 and 5,000,000 drachmae respectively, while Salome, Herod’s sister and a close friend of Livia (on Livia, Barrett 2004), had been awarded 5,000 drachmae plus three cities: Yavneh, Ashdod, and Phaselis. On Archelaus’s exile, Augustus confiscated his property for the imperial treasury and then awarded Salome a fourth city, Archelais (*Ant.* 17.340; Pliny, *NH* 14.13.3; Eshel/Richardson forthcoming). On her death in 10 CE she gave Livia this town “where palms are planted in very great numbers and the dates are of the highest quality” (*Ant.* 18.31), along with Phaselis, both north of Jericho; when Livia died in 29 CE Archelais passed to Tiberius. Archelaus died in Vienne in exile ca. 16 CE (Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.46; Kokkinos 1998, 228–9, argues for Archelaus’s release).

After Augustus exiled Archelaus, he appointed neither Antipas nor Philip to step into Archelaus's shoes, leaving both in the positions they had held for a decade. It appears neither had sufficiently distinguished himself in a decade of rule that Augustus gave one or other responsibility for Judea and Samaria, despite the fact that—or perhaps because—both were well known to the imperial family.

Philip (b. ca. 20 BCE), the son of Cleopatra of Jerusalem, was cooperative, reasonable, just, and content; in a skillful balancing act he kept his religiously and ethnically mixed tetrarchy quiet (*War* 2.1–117, 167–8; *Ant.* 17.20–30; 18.27–8, 106–8; Pliny *NH* 16.74; Ptolemy 5.15.26; Cassius Dio 59.12; Tacitus, *Annals* 12.23). He died still in possession of his tetrarchy but childless in 33/4 CE (*Ant.* 18.106; on Philip, see Strickert 2011, chap. 10; Schürer 1973–87, 1.336–40; Kokkinos 1998, 236–40).

Philip was the first in the family to mint coins with images of the Emperor and, in one case, Livia as well. His first coin issue has his own portrait on the reverse and the legend PHILIPPOU TETRARCHOU. Augustus is on the obverse with the legend KAISAR SEBASTOU (*TJC* 95); later the façade of the Augusteum replaced Philip's portrait. Jensen summarizes:

for the first time we have: (a) the head of the ruler himself, (b) the head of an emperor, (c) the name of the emperor, (d) the façade of a temple, (e) and a [sic] perhaps even a reference to the imperial cult with the coin deifying Livia.

(Jensen 2010, 199–200)

The coin's tetrastyle Augusteum is probably the Panias building, though its precise location is still unconfirmed ([Chapter 9](#)). He renamed it Caesarea Philippi to link his and the Emperor's names.

Both Antipas and Philip named cities for Livia/Julia, the late Emperor's wife, presumably after 14 CE, as Josephus says in *War* 2.168, though one or both cities may briefly have been called Livias (Eshel/Richardson forthcoming; Hoehner 1972, 87–91; Kindler 2004). When Josephus says Philip renamed Bethsaida after Augustus's daughter Julia (*Ant.* 18.28) he must be mistaken, for she was banished in 2 BCE to Pandateria. The city must be named after Livia (Aviam & Richardson 2001, 183), who became Julia Augusta when she was adopted into the *gens Iulii* in 14 CE (one of Philip's coin types links Augustus's portrait with Livia's). Josephus also says, in the preceding sentence, that Antipas renamed Betharamphtha after the Emperor's wife Julia, again after 14 CE, although the city could first have been named Livias (Jones 1937, 275).

Philip could dare to be more effusive in his homage to the imperial family because the majority of his population was non-Jewish ([Chapter 8](#)), even though parts of Gaulanitis and Hulitis near the Sea of Galilee had a significant number of Jews, including Iturean converts, and though Herod settled Babylonian and Idumean Jews in Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis. One might have expected he would be generous to Hellenistic cities such as Canatha (Qanawat), especially its main sanctuary at Si'a (Schürer 1973–87, 2.140–2), and Bosra (Busra), but there is no record.

Philip's strategy appears publicly on the road from Galilee to Syria, where one encountered a city named after Augustus's wife (Livias/Julias/Bethsaida) and then a city named after Augustus and Philip together (Caesarea Philippi/Panias/Banias), with a nearby temple to Roma and Augustus. Philip was able to display his connections with the imperial family, while Antipas, who may have felt similarly, could not be so blatant because Galilee was more Jewish than Philip's regions.

Tiberius

Tiberius and Antipas

Tiberius knew all Herod's beneficiaries, though differences in their interests and ages—Tiberius was already fifty-six years old when he succeeded Augustus in 14 CE—would have made relationships distant. Tiberius had long been occupied in matters of state or in his own pursuits (Levick 1976, 35–6). Antipas (whom Josephus regularly names “Herod”) was Archelaus's full brother (b. ca. 21 BCE), the son of Malthace (see *War* 2.167–8, 181–3; *Ant.* 18.101–29, 240–56; Mark 6:14–29); more scholarly attention focuses on Antipas than on Philip because of his connection to Jesus's story (Schürer 1973–87, 1.340–53; Jones 1937, 176–83; Hoehner 1970, 1972; Saulnier 1984, 362–76; Jensen 2010).

Although Antipas's territories were mainly Jewish ([Chapter 8](#)) and imperial cult centers or images on coins were impolitic, he occupied a “high place” in the circle of Tiberius's friends (*Ant.* 18.36). Acknowledging this status, he established Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee in the emperor's honor along Hellenistic lines in about 18 CE, the first Hellenistic city designed for Jews (Avi-Yonah 1950–1, 160–9). Its early archaeological remains include city gates and a Hippodamian plan; from

later periods there are a theater, basilica, baths, aqueduct, agora, and large mansion (Hirschfeld & Foerster 1994, 4.1464–73; Aviam & Richardson 2001, 195–6). The city had a *polis*-like council (*War* 2.641; *Life* 64, 169, 284, 300, 313, 381) and an *archōn* or magistrate (Smallwood 1981, 183). Josephus insists that the city was built above existing graves, contravening Torah, so Antipas settled it with unwilling Galileans and others to whom he gave houses and land on condition they not leave the city (*Ant.* 18.37–8). These seem unlikely provisions, however, in a city honoring the emperor, and the facts that Tiberias later had a large “house of prayer” (*Life* 277) and was a Rabbinic city of learning warn against exaggerating the accuracy of Josephus’s statements.

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Antipas restored Sepphoris, its other capital, making it “the ornament of all Galilee” (*Ant.* 18.27), in part modeled on a Hellenistic city (Weiss 1994; Netzer & Weiss 1994; Aviam & Richardson 2001, 193–5). Like Philip’s naming of Caesarea Philippi, Antipas’s renaming of Sepphoris as Autocratoris acknowledged the emperor. Josephus connects the renaming of both with Quirinius’s census in 6 CE (*Ant.* 18.26–8; Strickert 2011, chap. 12).

Both of Antipas’s regions spawned messianic fervor: John the Baptist operated in Perea, and Jesus mostly in Galilee. John outspokenly criticized Antipas “for Herodias, his brother’s wife” (Luke 3:19–20; Kokkinos 1998, 229–35), so Antipas executed him, causing Antipas’s subsequent defeat by Aretas IV, according to Josephus (*Ant.* 18.109–19). The real story was that Antipas had abandoned Aretas IV’s daughter to marry Herodias, wife of one half-brother and daughter of another. Straining the ties between neighboring Nabatea and Judea flouted Rome’s policy; dynastic intermarriage ensured the lengthy border would be peaceful. If Schürer is correct that Augustus had encouraged the match (Schürer 1973–87, 1.342; Suetonius, *Augustus* 48), the marriage break-up also would have offended the emperor. Aretas’s daughter fled to Macherus and then slipped over the border to Petra. When Aretas defeated Antipas resoundingly in 36 CE (*Ant.* 18.109–14), Tiberius told Vitellius, governor of Syria, to bring Aretas or his head to Rome, since, despite Antipas being the chief culprit, Aretas was the aggressor.

A few years later Rome and Parthia tried to resolve their power struggle (about 36 CE), meeting along the Euphrates River. Antipas was present and hosted a banquet in honor of Artabanus and Vitellius (father of the future emperor) in a pavilion on a bridge (*Ant.* 18.101–5).

It is debated whether Tiberius or Gaius was emperor at the time; Suetonius and Cassius Dio, and implicitly Tacitus, place the event under Gaius (Schürer 1973–87, 1.351; Ziegler 1964), perhaps incorrectly (Levick 1976, 147). Suetonius (*Vitellius* 2) ignores Antipas’s role, and we are left wondering if he was observer, host, broker, or mediator. Although his rush to communicate the news to the emperor is consistent with a major role, Vitellius’s anger implies a small role. When these events concluded, Tiberius may have been dead and Gaius already emperor.

Gaius was particularly supportive of Agrippa I, the new man in the Levant. Agrippa wished “to poison Gaius’s mind against [Antipas]” by recalling Antipas’s links with Sejanus and claiming he was plotting with Parthia (Bruce 1963–5, 19–21), so that by 39 CE Antipas was exiled to Gaul with his wife Herodias.

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Antipas’s building projects and benefactions (Marshall 2015, 145–9) are attested by very thin inscriptional evidence in Galilee (Zangenberg, Attridge, & Martin 2007) and slightly more outside Galilee, limited to sites such as Kos and Delos (OGIS 416, 417; both plausibly refer to Antipas) and perhaps Chios (SEG 16.488). An inscription from Berytus indirectly alludes to him within a three-generation group of a temple’s benefactors (Chapter 10).

Excursus: Jesus’s trial

Luke’s account of Jesus’s trial says Antipas was “very glad” to see him (Luke 23:7–8), since Jesus was a Galilean. Luke’s gospel connects Jesus and Antipas more closely than other gospels: in Luke Jesus knows Joanna, the wife of Antipas’s steward Chuza (Luke 8:1–3), one of several women who followed Jesus (Bauckham 2002, 109–202); only Luke says Antipas wants to kill Jesus (Luke 13:31–3); in Luke Pilate and Antipas became friends because of Jesus’s trial (Luke 23:14–15). Luke’s account is probably independent of Mark and should be preferred over Mark’s (Catchpole 1971).

The historical situation is perplexing, however (Bond 2004). Was Antipas legally competent to deal with Jesus in Jerusalem? Were Antipas and Pilate at odds? Did Antipas want to be rid of Jesus? (1) Regarding Antipas’s competence: in Roman law at this time trials were conducted where a crime was committed; only later did trials take place in a

criminal's domicile. Magistrates rarely handed jurisdiction over to a visiting magistrate, so Pilate could not have evaded jurisdiction (Sherwin-White 1963, 28–31; Hoehner 1999, 224–50). A similar distinction between a “territorial” approach to jurisdiction and a “national” approach has continued in European law to the present (Friedland 2016). (2) There is no direct evidence of a strained relationship between Pilate and Antipas; the only evidence is the claim they became friends as a result of Jesus's trial (Luke 23:12). (3) The claim that Antipas wanted to kill Jesus (Luke 13:31–3), though exaggerated, is not totally implausible; Antipas had recently executed John the Baptist, a fellow-preacher of coming doom and gloom whose challenge to Antipas was a direct and personal criticism of Antipas's marriage to Herodias.

Pilate's patron in Rome was Sejanus, Tiberius's advisor and commander of the Praetorian Guard (Seager 1972; Levick 1976, 172–9; Bammel 1952, 205–10). Tacitus says “the closer a man's intimacy with Sejanus, the stronger his claim to the emperor's friendship” (*Annals* 6.8). If Sejanus was antagonistic to Jews (Philo, *In Flacc.* 1; *Legatio* 159–61; Smallwood 1956, 327), were Pilate's views similar and was his position in Judea jeopardized when Sejanus was executed in 31 CE? The crowd's comment at Jesus's trial could suggest Pilate's real or imagined insecurity: “If you let this man go you are no friend to Caesar” (John 19:12; Levick 1976, 136). On the other hand, *Acts of Pilate* 2.1, of uncertain date but possibly reflecting late first-century traditions, has Pilate claim, “my wife is pious and prefers to practice Judaism,” possibly hinting at a not infrequent attraction to Judaism among the aristocratic class (Murray 2004, 18–21).

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Pilate served an unusually long period as prefect (26–36 CE); an inscription from Caesarea Maritima records his generosity to a “Tiberieum,” probably a small shrine (McLean 2000, 61–2; Richardson 2004, 23–4): [- - -]S TIBERIEUM / [- - - - - Pon]TIUS PILATUS / [pra[E]FECTUS IUDA[ea]E / [- - - - . Josephus says that Pilate displayed effigies of the Emperor (*War* 2.169–74; *Ant.* 18.55–9; cf. *Leg.* 299). His accounts of Pilate—a famous passage on Jesus is squeezed into the middle (*Ant.* 18.63–4)—portray Pilate as a tough Roman functionary who, faced with a sticky situation of his own making, gives ground so as not to create questions about his competence. Tiberius wanted quiet in the provinces, so he wrote Pilate angrily to take down the offensive objects (Levick 1976, 136–7). When Vitellius sent Pilate to face Tiberius in Rome, Tiberius—luckily for Pilate—died just before he arrived (*Ant.*

18.88–9). What Gaius did about the case is unknown. Philo reports Agrippa I's equally harsh view, that Pilate wanted "to annoy the multitude" (*Leg.* 299), that he was "naturally inflexible, a blend of self-will and relentlessness" (301), responsible for bribes, outrages, wanton injuries, executions without trials, and grievous cruelty (303).

Gaius

Gaius and Antipas

Antipas lost his power when he half-heartedly asked the new emperor, Gaius (Caligula), to award him the title of king after four decades as tetrarch. His nephew and brother-in-law, Agrippa I, had been named king on receiving Philip's territories; his wife Herodias, Agrippa's sister, felt Antipas's title should match Agrippa's (*War* 2.182; *Ant.* 18.240), but she failed to reckon with Agrippa's malice and close friendship with Gaius (Schwartz 1990, 56). Agrippa accused Antipas of conspiring with Sejanus against Tiberius and conspiring with Artabanus of Parthia against Gaius, stockpiling weapons for 70,000 soldiers. Although one charge was groundless and the other exaggerated, Antipas ineffectively denied the charges and confirmed he had weapons (*Ant.* 18.240–56; *War* 2.178). Gaius exiled Antipas and Herodias to Lugdunum (Schwartz 1990, 5), adding insult to injury by handing the territory and income to Agrippa I (39 CE).²

Gaius and Marcus Julius Agrippa I

Agrippa I, Herod's grandson and a Hasmonean descendant (b. ca. 10 BCE), was the son of Aristobulus, whom Herod executed in 7 BCE. Brought up in Rome, he was a friend of Tiberius's son Drusus (b. 13 BCE; d. 23 CE), as well as of Gaius and Claudius, especially Gaius (Schwartz 1990, 39–45).

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While on Capri Caligula made the acquaintance of one individual who was to remain a close and trusted friend throughout his reign. Julius Agrippa ... was a man whose personality in many respects mirrored Caligula's own. Agrippa was brilliant, unpredictable, much given to reckless extravagance ... but he also possessed both a highly developed sense of self preservation and fine talents as a diplomat.

(Barrett 1989, 34)

Agrippa's mother Berenice was a close friend of Gaius's grandmother, Antonia (*Ant.* 18.143), and Salome, Agrippa's grandmother, with Gaius's great-grandmother, Livia. When he was deeply in debt, influential friends bailed him out, including Antipas in Galilee, Tiberius Julius Alexander in Egypt, Antonia in Rome, and a Samaritan freedman (*Ant.* 18.16–67).

Tiberius had imprisoned Agrippa for saying he hoped the emperor would die soon so Gaius could succeed him. When Tiberius died, March 16, 37 CE, there was jubilation over Gaius's accession (*Ant.* 18.228–65; Barrett 1989, 51). Gaius moved Agrippa from prison to house arrest; he gave him Philip's old territories, adding Abilene; he returned the income that had been put in escrow; and he awarded him the *ornamenta praetoria* (Barrett 1989, 63). On his part, Agrippa honored Caligula's third wife Caesonia on one of his coins (Barrett 1989, 95).

Agrippa took up his new position in 38 CE, going via Alexandria at Gaius's request (Philo, *In Flaccum*, 25–8). Gaius had some ulterior motive—a job for Agrippa to undertake—for in Alexandria Agrippa “wanted to reach the house of his host without anyone seeing him” and “slip out of the city quietly and unobserved.” Instead, his visit caused a riot, prompting an embassy to Gaius, led by Philo, whose first-hand account of events provides an invaluable picture of Judaism's relationship with Rome, beginning with a glowing tribute to Gaius and ending with an encomium to Augustus:

Gaius ... succeeded to the sovereignty of the whole earth and sea, gained not by faction but established by law, with all parts ... harmoniously adjusted, the Greek in full agreement with the barbarian, the civil with the military, to enjoy and participate in peace He found ready in hand a mass of accumulated goods, gold and silver, which he had inherited, ... vast forces of infantry, cavalry, ships, revenues.

(*Legatio* 8–10)

the whole human race ... was on the verge of utter destruction had it not been for one man and leader Augustus whom men fitly called the averter of evil. ... This is he who exterminated wars both of the open kind and the covert, which are brought about by the raids of brigands. This is he who cleared the sea of pirate ships and filled it with merchant vessels. This is he who reclaimed every state to liberty He was what we may call the source and fountain-head of the Augustan stock in general. He was also the first and the greatest and the common benefactor in that he displaced the rule of many and committed the ship of the commonwealth to be steered by a single pilot, that is, himself, a marvelous master of the science of government.

The riot was triggered by a combination of the governor's timidity and Alexandrian hostility to Jews (*In Flaccum*, 29–35). When Aulus Avilius Flaccus (governor 32–8 CE) turned a blind eye to the mob's actions (*Legatio* 132) the Jewish community produced “a document presenting in a summarized form the story of our sufferings and our claims,” following a longer “supplication” Agrippa had given Gaius (*Legatio* 178–9). Its apologetic approach is clear in a section that refers to Marcus Agrippa, after whom Agrippa I was named:

your maternal grandfather, M. Agrippa, being in Judea when Herod my grandfather was king of the country, saw fit to come up from the coast to the capital ... delighting himself with the spectacle both of the ornate structure and of the sacrifices and the ritual observed in the services and the majestic aspect of the high priest when arrayed in the sacred vestments and conducting the holy rites. After decking the temple with all the dedicatory gifts which the law made permissible and benefiting the inhabitants by granting every favour ... and paying many compliments to Herod and receiving a host of the same from him, he was escorted to the harbours.

(*Legatio* 296–7)

Flaccus was a weak toady who put statues of the emperor in Alexandria's synagogues to satisfy the crowd (*In Flaccum* 43), actions leading eventually to his removal and execution (*In Flaccum* 185). A couple of years later, parallel troubles arose in Jamnia (Yavneh) over Jewish aggression against Roman religion, destroying an imperial cult altar (*Legatio* 201; Sly 2000, 249–65; Kloppenborg 2000, 227–48); Gaius retaliated by ordering that his statue be installed in the temple in Jerusalem (*Legatio* 203). Philo's embassy was trying to catch up with Gaius to tell him of the problems with Flaccus when they learned of this last outrage from a messenger (winter of 38/9; Schwartz 1990, 196–9). “Gaius has ordered a colossal statue to be set up within the inner sanctuary [in Jerusalem] dedicated to himself under the name of Zeus” (*Legatio* 185–9; Ferrill 1991, chap. 9).

There are several accounts of the sequence of events: *War* 2.185–203; *Ant.* 18.257–83; 19.278–85; *Legatio* 184–377; Tacitus *Hist.* 5.9.2; and a papyrus document found in 1912 (Bell 1924). The much-debated differences are difficult to reconcile, but the outlines can be sketched (Schwartz 1990, 96–106). When Gaius's instructions about his statue became known, Judeans urged Petronius, the Syrian governor, to prevent such an affront. Petronius courageously wrote Gaius, who rejected his appeal, telling Petronius to transport the statue to Jerusalem. At Ptolemais (Acco), a large delegation met Petronius, willing to die to show their opposition. Coincidentally, news of Gaius's assassination

According to Josephus, it was Agrippa who defused this great crisis by appealing to Gaius (*Ant.* 18.289–309). If Josephus is correct in *Antiquities*, Agrippa deserves the way he has been lionized; but it is worth noting that in *War* Josephus is silent on Agrippa's role. In that account, Gaius threatened Petronius with death (*War* 2.203), while the ship carrying the letter was storm-delayed. Whatever the explanation, Gaius's statue did not reach the temple.

Claudius

Claudius and Agrippa I

In the chaotic moments following Gaius's assassination (January 24, 41 CE) there was no concerted plan of action. Agrippa I filled the vacuum: "as chance would have it he received a summons both from the senate, calling him into consultation, and from Claudius in the [Praetorian] camp; both parties solicited his services in this pressing emergency" (*War* 2.206). Josephus says in one account the Praetorian guards acted spontaneously, the other says the guard was determined to make Claudius emperor (*War* 2.204–17; *Ant.* 19.212–53). Barrett reconstructs events persuasively: as Agrippa cared for Gaius's body, Claudius was acclaimed emperor in the Praetorian camp; Agrippa then made his way there.

Agrippa had a keen political eye, and appreciated at once the strength of Claudius' position. Characteristically, he had no hesitation in enlisting himself firmly on what he saw as the winning side. He urged Claudius to stand firm, then went to the senate, pretending to arrive casually from a banquet.

(Barrett 1989, 172–6, here 174)

He advised the Senate not to oppose Claudius, and then—having already advised Claudius—joined the delegation to reason with him. Within twenty-four hours Claudius had taken control smoothly.

Events may have been slightly more complicated. A coin dated 42/3 CE gives Herod of Chalcis a role (contrast Schwartz 1990, 92): on its obverse the royal brothers flank a togate Claudius to place wreaths on his head, while on the reverse clasped hands are surrounded by a legend:

“Covenant between king Agrippa and Caesar Augustus and the Senate and the people of Rome, friendship and alliance.” That wording implies a formal treaty, with the obverse portraying a meeting in Rome in 41 CE when Claudius confirmed Gaius’s grants to Agrippa, adding Judea and Samaria (Kropp 2013, 377–89; see [Figure 13.1](#)). This *risqué* image inverts the reality, since Claudius should be crowning them. Instead, in a piece of self-promotion, two client kings share the trappings of imperial dignity.

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This numismatic portrayal seems at odds with another event: Claudius’s expulsion of Jews from Rome (Suetonius *Claudius* 25; Cassius Dio 60.6.6–7; Acts 18:2). The date is debated, but there is much to be said for 41 CE (Orosius 7.6; Schwartz 1990, 94–6) rather than 49 CE. The year 41 coincides with Claudius’s accession and the beginning of Agrippa’s reign (41–4 CE) over most of Herod’s former regions, although there is an obvious inconsistency in Claudius expelling compatriots of two influential supporters. Some have argued the expulsion refers only to Jewish Christians, a very unlikely possibility, but we have no fresh explanation to offer.

Agrippa I walked a fine line between dependence and independence. Though a Romanophile, his actions could irritate Rome. He convened a meeting of local kings in Tiberias (*Ant.* 19.338–42), very obviously stepping on the emperor’s toes by being too friendly with imperial dependents: Antiochus of Commagene, Sampsigeramus of Emesa, Cotys of Lesser Armenia, Polemon of Pontus, and Agrippa’s brother Herod of Chalcis (Schürer 1973–87, 1.448). Marsus, the Governor of Syria, was “suspicious of such concord and intimate friendship among them” and told them all to return home (*Ant.* 19.341). Schwartz thinks this was “something like a class reunion” (Schwartz 1990, 137–9), for they had naturally close relationships. The meeting’s innocence is uncertain, even doubtful.



Figure 13.1 A coin of Agrippa I shows the Emperor Claudius being crowned with a wreath by two of Herod's grandchildren, turning reality upside-down: the emperor should be crowning them. The three standing persons are named: King [Marcus Julius] Agrippa [1], Caesar Augustus [i.e., Claudius, in toga], and King Herod [of Chalcis].

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Excursus: Paul and Felix and Drusilla

Marcus Antonius Felix, who appears in the Acts narrative of Paul's hearing (Acts 24:3–21), was the brother of Pallas, a freedman of Antonia, secretary of the treasury under Claudius, and the person who encouraged Claudius to marry Agrippina Minor and adopt her son Nero. Felix was procurator of Judea 52–9 CE, and was married to Drusilla, daughter of Agrippa I and sister of Agrippa II (Acts 24:24–7); the couple exemplifies marriages between highly placed Romans and Jews. In a case involving Paul, their background was useful because they were “well informed about the new way” (Acts 24:22), as Christianity came to be known. Parenthetically, we may note that Agrippina was “pro-Jewish” as a result of personal friendships with Agrippa II and his mother Berenice (Barrett 1996, 126). Despite these good connections, Nero removed Pallas from his position.

Felix had been Claudius's “favorite” (Suetonius, *Claudius* 28); his upward mobility is reflected in having married princesses in two of his three marriages: Drusilla of Mauretania, daughter of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene and granddaughter of Cleopatra and Mark Antony; Drusilla of Judea, daughter of Agrippa I and Cypros and ex-wife of King

Aziz of Emesa, whom she divorced to marry Felix (Kokkinos 1998, 319–22); and a third unknown wife. Felix and Drusilla heard Paul's defense—as Herod's family began to play a role in the treatment of the Jesus movement—but Felix decided to leave Paul's case for Festus, a non-decision consistent with Acts' portrayal of Roman officials as benign.

Nero

Nero and Agrippa II

Marcus Julius Agrippa II (b. ca. 27 CE)—Agrippa I's son and Herod's great-grandson—was brought up in Rome from childhood. When his father died in 44 CE he was too young to inherit, so Judea was run by a series of Roman procurators, including Felix and Festus. After the death of Herod of Chalcis in 48 CE, however, Claudius gave Agrippa II Chalcis, together with control over the Jerusalem temple and appointing authority over high priests. Herod of Chalcis's widow, Berenice, caused a scandal by moving in with Agrippa II, her brother, in what was then—and is still—considered an incestuous relationship (*Ant.* 20.143). By ca. 52 CE Agrippa II took up his responsibilities in Chalcis, but in 53 CE Claudius took back Chalcis and gave him Philip's regions: Batanea, Trachonitis, and Gaulanitis, plus Abila and some territory in the Lebanon. Nero added parts of Galilee and Perea to Agrippa's territory after his accession; Agrippa reciprocated by renaming Caesarea Philippi (Banias) Neronias and striking coins with Nero's image (den Hollander 2014).

Nero's marriage to Poppaea Sabina, for years his mistress, was unexpected. He was Poppaea's third husband, after Poppaea's lengthy marriage to Rufus Crispinus, the praetorian commander under Claudius, and then marriage to Otho, the future emperor and friend of Nero. She divorced Otho in 58 CE, while she and Nero were lovers for some years before marrying in 63 CE (Morgan 2006, 37). Poppaea was “a worshipper of God” (*Ant.* 20.195), possibly meaning a convert to Judaism but more likely a follower of Jewish customs. When Josephus led a delegation to Rome in the early 60s to request the freedom of some priests detained in Rome (den Hollander 2014, chap. 2), Aliturus, a Jewish actor and a “special favorite of Nero,” introduced Josephus to Poppaea, who gave him large gifts (*Vita* 16). In ca. 65 CE Agrippa II issued a coin of Neronias/Caesarea Philippi (Banias), with a seated figure of Poppaea in a distyle temple matching a standing figure of Nero in a hexastyle temple.

Excursus: Festus and Paul

Judea's governance continued to be in Rome's hands. Nero appointed Festus—his dates are debated—to follow Felix (*Ant.* 20.182; *War* 2.271–2). On his arrival Festus went to Jerusalem, where he was lobbied about Paul's case, which was still hanging fire (Acts 25:1–5); on his return to Caesarea Festus met Paul, then being held in the praetorian palace in Caesarea (Herod's Promontory Palace), to discuss an appeal to Rome (Acts 25:6–12). Festus met Agrippa II and his sister Berenice in Caesarea a little later, during which they discussed Paul's case (Acts 25:13–22). Festus asked for Agrippa's help in understanding the issues, but Paul, tired of waiting, asked to be sent to Rome. After Paul's long statement (Acts 26:2–29), Festus, Agrippa, Berenice, and the rest agreed that Paul “could have been discharged if he had not appealed to the Emperor” (Acts 26:30–2). Acts' author argues in both instances that the new movement was acceptable to Roman authorities and to Herod's descendants Drusilla, Agrippa, and Berenice.

The 60s and 70s CE

The 60s and 70s was a difficult period for Rome, with serious revolts breaking out in different parts of the empire: Boudicca's revolt in Britannia began in 60 CE; the Jewish revolt in Judea began in 66 CE; and Civilis's revolt in Germania began in 69 CE. The latter revolt under a commander of an auxiliary troop led to the defeat of two legions (Tacitus *Hist.* 4.12–37) and to a wider revolt in which more legions defected. Boudicca's revolt in Britannia involved substantial loss of Roman civilian lives as well as of soldiers (Tacitus *Ann.* 14.29–39). During Judea's revolt Agrippa II was resolutely on the Roman side, persuading Judeans to abandon dreams of independence in a world dominated by Roman power. The tide turned in Rome's favor when Vespasian, with his son Titus, took on command of the legions. Vespasian soon overwhelmed Josephus, revolutionary commander in Galilee, at the siege of Yodfat/Jotapata (Richardson 2004, chaps. 3–5; see [Figure 8.2](#)); on surrendering, Josephus predicted his elevation to the purple; Vespasian later provided Josephus with a house in Rome, an annuity, and the status of client (*Life* 423, 428–9).

The several revolts were bad enough, but they were all out at the fringes. The heart of the empire was devastated physically by Rome's fire in the midst of the revolts in 64 CE. Blame for the fire was pinned by some on the growing Christian movement, slowly becoming strong enough to warrant being attacked in this way (Tacitus *Annals* 15.44). Four years later the unprecedented "year of the four emperors" created chaos in 68–9 CE (Wellesley 2000; Morgan 2006), as overambitious and underachieving claimants set their eyes on occupying the throne.

Vespasian

Nero committed suicide in 68 CE, with Galba, Otho, and Vitellius vying to succeed him during the year of the four emperors. Vespasian dispatched Titus and Agrippa II to Rome to offer congratulations on Galba's accession in 68 CE (*War* 4. 497–8), but Galba was killed before they arrived in Rome, so Titus turned back. By the time he returned to Judea, Vespasian had ploughed through Galilee, Gaulanitis, Perea, and Samaritis, and was assembling his troops for an assault on Jerusalem.

Before the siege was fully underway, Vespasian's troops took matters into their own hands and acclaimed him emperor. Tiberius Julius Alexander, a wealthy Jew, nephew of Philo, and governor of Egypt, was "the first military governor to declare for Vespasian and . . . Vespasian officially dated his reign from Alexander's proclamation in Egypt" on July 1, 69 CE (Barrett 1989, 5). Vespasian left for Rome to exchange his red military cloak for imperial purple, leaving Titus in charge in Jerusalem. In mid-December the Senate declared Vespasian Emperor, and in April 70 CE Titus's siege of Jerusalem began, with Agrippa II standing beside him for the revolt's traumatic and decisive climax.

In the meantime, Titus had divorced his second wife (his first wife had died) and had begun a liaison with Berenice, Agrippa's sister and reputedly incestuous partner (Tacitus *Hist.* 2.2; Juvenal, *Satires*, 6.155–8; *Ant.* 20.145–6), a union that lasted until the late 70s. It looked as if the relationship of Titus and Berenice might cement connections between the imperial throne and the Herodian family. As it turned out, however, the union of a successful Roman general, son of the emperor, with a great-granddaughter of Herod, wife of one king and lover of another, could not survive Titus's becoming Emperor. He put her to one side.

Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian

The siege of Jerusalem began in 70 CE, a little over a century since Herod's siege of the city. Rome's legions hemmed in the Jewish forces by controlling the surrounding hills (see [Figure 5.1](#)). The end result of the punishing Roman catapult and ballista fire was not in doubt, though it took several months to build siege works, soften the defenses, breach the walls, move progressively through the city, and mop up the last defenders. Roman troops took the temple first; by early August the rest of the city fell at enormous cost of life and destruction, including the temple and its adjuncts. Josephus's detailed eyewitness account is told in *War*, Book 5.

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Titus went to Rome to share Vespasian's triumph after Jerusalem fell; Flavius Silva and the Legio X Fretensis dealt with the Jewish soldiers occupying Herod's three strongest fortresses, Herodium, Macherus, and Masada. Roman tactics—circumvallation and multiple siege camps—are visible at Masada. Rome was determined to win the bitterly contested ground, but the final operations took several years, before Masada fell in 74 CE. An extensively minted Roman coin reflected the end: a legionnaire standing with spear in hand over a Jewish woman weeping under a palm tree, symbol of Judea, with a caption, either IUDAEA CAPTA or PAX AUGUSTI.

Vespasian constructed the Templum Pacis (Temple of Peace/Forum of Vespasian; 71–5 CE) in the Roman Forum to celebrate his victory, a monument paralleling Augustus's celebratory Ara Pacis (Altar of Peace) eight decades earlier. Inside the innovative structure were artifacts from the temple of Jerusalem: "Vespasian also proudly kept here the works of gold taken from the Temple of the Jews, but ordered that their Law and the purple veil of the inner temple be kept safely in the palace" (*War* 7.158). The Temple of Peace was not a typical temple; the building functioned more as a museum than a temple and its *temenos* was landscaped with gardens and pools. A large archaeological project has been unveiling significant and previously not understood features of its design over the last two decades (Gorski & Packer 2015).

Titus

Titus dismissed Berenice as the Senate wished; on Vespasian's death, June 23, 79 CE, the Senate named Titus emperor. Though Berenice's family had been reliable Roman citizens for four generations, Titus's liaison with Berenice was unpopular; he should not share a Jewish bed

so soon after he and Vespasian had put down a Judean revolt. To emphasize his role in the revolt, he constructed the Arch of Titus (81 CE), on which he is shown in a four-horse chariot being crowned by Victory, with Roma holding a horse's bridle. Its bas-reliefs portray the gold menorah, table of showbread, and silver trumpets from the temple, whose originals may have been a few meters away housed in Vespasian's Templum Pacis.

Both Agrippa II and Josephus probably witnessed the dedications of these two monuments, since both were living in Rome. Judean and imperial affairs, victors and vanquished, were intertwined in a convoluted way: Josephus, a defeated Jewish general, was living in a house offered him by his victor, while Agrippa II was celebrating the rise of Titus, the successful Roman general who had bedded and then dismissed Agrippa's sister and partner in incest. Titus died after only two years as emperor (September 13, 81 CE), and with him died the unlikely possibility that Herod's great-granddaughter, Berenice, might have shared the imperial throne.

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Domitian

A few years after Domitian (b. 51 CE) succeeded Titus, Agrippa II—Berenice's brother—minted a coin with Domitian on the obverse (ca. 86/7 CE; *TJC* 165a, Hendin 617); the reverse refers to "King Agrippa," and shows Nike standing with her left foot on a crested helmet, writing on a shield that rests on her left knee, Agrippa's unsubtle way of associating himself with Vespasian's and Titus's victory in the revolt of 66–74, a grotesque celebration by a Jewish ruler of "victory" over his own people.

Agrippa II was part of a continuing "oriental group"—mostly family and friends—who were closely linked with the imperial family through Agrippa I and Mark Antony's daughter Antonia (Jones 1992, 3–7). The group included Agrippa II and Berenice, as well as the brothers Tiberius Julius Alexander and Marcus Julius Alexander (nephews of Philo). Jones emphasizes the financial ties between them, going back to Philo's brother Alexander the Alabarch (father of Tiberius and Marcus), a Jewish-Greek Alexandrian connected financially with Antonia, Claudius, Agrippa I, Agrippa II, and the Flavian family (*Ant.* 18.159–60, 165; 19.276).

Connections between imperial Rome and Herod's descendants

weakened after Agrippa's death, the date of which is disputed. The conventional date is ca. 92/3 CE (Schürer 1973–87, 480–3), though Kokkinos has argued for ca. 100 CE (Kokkinos 1998, 396–9). Agrippa's kingdom—including Batanea and Auranitis—was subsumed under the province of Syria, ending more than a century and a half of Herodian involvement in Levantine politics, and three decades of Herodian attachment to the Flavian family.

Flavius Clemens and Flavia Domitilla

In a twist to Domitian's story, the childless emperor adopted two nephews as heirs, children of Flavius Clemens (Vespasian's nephew) and Flavia Domitilla (Vespasian's granddaughter and Domitian's niece), renaming them Vespasian junior and Domitian junior (Jones 1992, 47–8). The former appears on a coin of Smyrna in 94/5 CE (*BMC* 316; *RPC* II.1028). Clemens, however, was executed in 96 CE at the end of his year as consul with Domitian, and Domitilla exiled (Cassius Dio 67.14.1–2; Suetonius, *Domitian* 15.1); their children's fate is unrecorded. The charge against the parents was atheism, sometimes taken to mean they were closet Christians, a possible interpretation, but not the likeliest, since the association of atheism with Christians is first found in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9.2 (late 150s or 160s CE in Smyrna; Ascough 2005) and in the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (170s CE in Lyon; Pliny, *Letters* 10.96; Musurillo 1972, 64–5). A charge of atheism in the 90s CE more likely refers to converts to Judaism or to “god-fearers,” persons following Judaism's precepts (Wilson 2004, 102–3; Smallwood 1981, 378–81).

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An unexpected string of events linking Judaism and the imperial family had begun in the 40s CE, when Agrippa I and Herod of Chalcis—two Jewish kings—portrayed themselves placing a wreath on Claudius's head. It continued through Nero's affair with and then marriage to Poppaea, “a worshipper of God” (god-fearer?). Then in an unusual love affair Titus had a long liaison with Berenice, Jewish by birth though ambiguously attached to Judaism. It seems Judaism had drawn implausibly close to the Flavian family or, better put, the family had drawn surprisingly close to Judaism. Clemens and Domitilla, however, were the first persons within the imperial family to be personally involved with Judaism (Murray 2004, 15–21). When Domitian named their children heirs, he put Jewish sympathizers within a short distance of the throne. These various connections occurred within the short span

of twenty-five years before and twenty-five years after the Jewish revolt.

Domitian's harsh treatment of Clemens and Domitilla is not easily explained. A partial explanation may be that Domitian used his own relatives to warn members of the Roman elite not to dabble with foreign religions. Such an explanation may have been connected with the Jewish tax—the revamped temple tax payable by male Jews over eighteen to Jupiter Capitolinus—that Domitian collected more strictly (Suetonius, *Domitian* 12.2), at the same time proscribing impiety or “Jewish life” (*ioudaïkos bios*; Cassius Dio 68.1.2). Not even Domitian's family members were immune from punishment if they compromised traditional Roman credentials.

At about this time—late in Domitian's or early in Nerva's reign—four rabbis traveled to Rome. The point of the voyage of R. Gamaliel, R. Eleazar ben Azariah, R. Aqiba, and R. Yehoshua ben Hananyah is perplexing: possibly it was occasioned by Domitian's actions against Jews, possibly it followed Clemens and Domitilla's fall, possibly it had to do with a plan to re-build the temple (Richardson & Shukster 1983, 31–55). Evidence for any view is weak.

Nerva

Nerva soon altered conditions created by Domitian, as an early Nervan coin states: *FISCI IUDAICI CALUMNIA SUBLATA*. In the twenty years since the Jewish revolt had been put down, the Flavian family had built the *Templum Pacis* and Titus's Arch, the Jewish tax had been revised, Clemens had been executed, Domitilla exiled, and their heirs quietly removed from the scene. Under Nerva, however, Jews were relieved of the *calumnia* of the Jewish tax, presumably from the worst features of its harsh collection (Barclay 1996, 311–13).

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We can go a little further:

The coin's iconography hints that the significance of the Nervan reform may well have been more far-reaching than an exchequer reform of an unpopular tax. Nerva's coin is dominated by the figure of a palm tree—the symbol of Judea. ... The majority of the Flavian coins also show a central palm tree, but, as might be expected of coins celebrating the defeat of Judea, the palm is flanked by a weeping woman and a standing centurion. ... Nerva's coin in effect removed the symbols of Judea's prior defeat and subjugation at the hands of the Flavians.

(Shukster & Richardson 1986, 21–2)

By retaining some elements of the Flavian coin and removing others, the visual message was changed to cohere with the inscriptional message: the *calumnia* of the *fiscus iudaicus* was removed. We do not know what or who prompted Nerva to take this action.

Nerva instituted a period of substantial change. Suetonius claimed Domitian had dreamed that “the condition of the empire would be happier and more prosperous after his time; and this was shortly shown to be true through the uprightness and moderate rule of the succeeding emperors” (Suetonius, *Domitian* 23). Echoing the sentiment from a different perspective, Dio epitomizes the change: “it was bad to have an emperor under whom nobody was permitted to do anything, but worse to have one under whom everybody was permitted to do everything” (Cassius Dio 68.1). Nerva was powerless to undo Domitian’s treatment of Clemens and Domitilla, but he undid the injustices of a harsh application of the re-worked Jewish tax.

With his accession, a confusing period in Rome’s relations with her Jewish subjects came to a temporary halt, temporary because the frayed relationships of the late first century CE soon unraveled again. Widespread Jewish revolts—the Diaspora Revolts—broke out in 115–17 CE in Cyrenaica, Libya, Cyprus, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and perhaps Judea (Fuhrmann 2012; Pucci Ben Zeev, 2005; Méléze-Modrzejewski 1989). Fifteen years later, revolt broke out again in Judea during the Bar Kokhba Revolt of 132–5 CE, triggered by Rome’s re-founding of Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina (Mor 2016). The revolt, briefly successful, was eventually brutally suppressed, with two consequences. First, Rome was no longer willing for Judea to be a self-governing part of the empire; henceforth it would be a province like other provinces. In the longer term, second, one of the fissiparous groups within Judaism, the group eventually called Christianity, began to differentiate itself from its parent and slowly follow a path that led to its becoming the empire’s religion. But that is another story.

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Conclusion

The story of Rome’s evolving relationship with Judaism was an indissoluble part of Herod’s family’s story, from his grandfather to his great-great-grandchildren. The seven or eight generations demonstrated the benefits and the dangers of exercising power at the highest levels within the most powerful empire of the time. While the family respected

Rome from the award of citizenship in 47 BCE onwards, by the time the story drew to a close a century and a half later, its members were indistinguishable from Romans. Many of them—those who held important positions—were crucial to the stability of the Levant, because, even in such difficult circumstances as the Alexandrian Riots and the Jewish revolts, they accepted the empire’s agenda. They survived relatively unscathed through the dramatic events of the first two imperial families, the Julio-Claudians and the Flavians, itself a remarkable achievement, and in the process saw those imperial families draw unusually near to Judaism.

Herod’s family was among the best-known families of antiquity, better known than the family of any fellow dependent king. Its members played Rome’s game, with Herod himself doing about as good a job as could be done. The state he headed was at its most transformative and influential period, a period whose events shaped the politics, the morality, and the religions of the western world for centuries.

Judaism’s place in the world was altered by Herod’s enthusiastic alignment with Rome both positively and negatively. Negatively, the revolts against Rome from 66 to 135 CE constrained Judaism’s view of itself and its place in international society. But positively, Judaism’s self-understanding was enhanced by the second temple’s influence, by Judea’s prominent role, and by Diaspora Judaism’s strength.

Ironically, Herod emerged with an almost monochromatically dark and malevolent portrait in both Jewish and Christian circles. This has been changing to a more vibrantly colorful picture of Herod’s character and his influence. Although he had his own and his family’s fortunes in mind, he also had the long-term good of his people and their place in the world prominently before him, while at the same time having the interests of Rome at heart. He was a “Jewish king,” who wished for no other position and embraced no different intention. He was also “friend of the Romans,” who had no wish to withdraw from the opportunities and benefits this offered. He and his family lived their lives and made their reputations in the creative tension between these two roles.

Notes

- 1 The parable derives from Q, an early, but hypothetical, source of gospel material common to Matthew and Luke and not derived from Mark.
- 2 It is uncertain which Lugdunum: modern Lyon on the Rhone, a center of Roman culture in the first century, is more likely, though Lugdunum near the Spanish border is possible.

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